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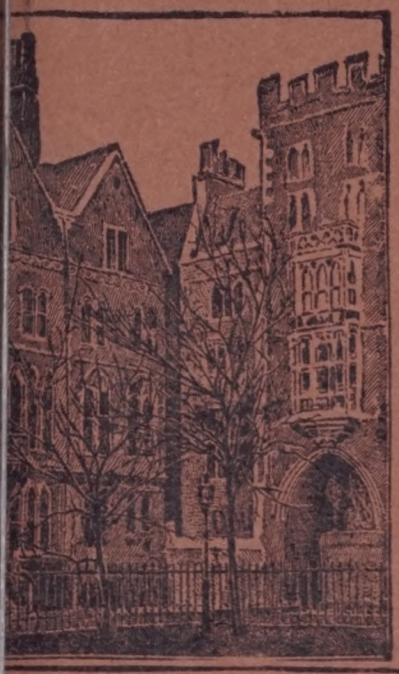

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BY

HELEN B. MATHERS

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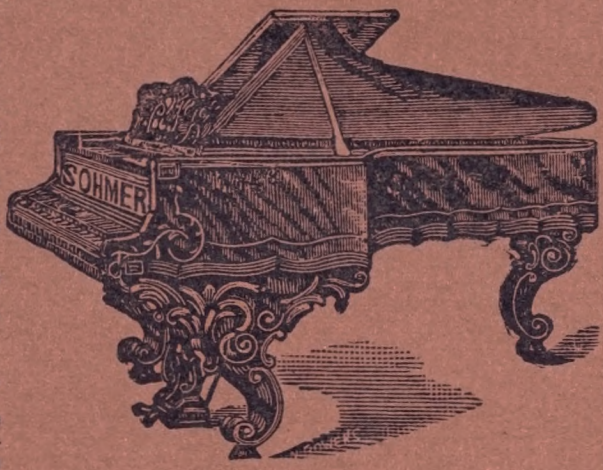

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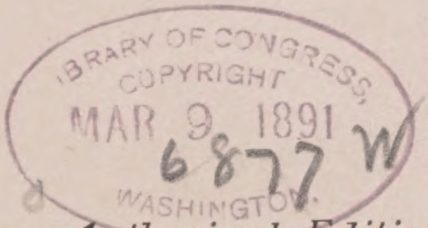

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THE MYSTERY OF NO. 13.

CHAPTER I.

"O, long, long is the winter nicht,
And slowly daws the day,
There is a slain knicht in my bower,
And I wish he were away."

THE light grew stronger, and crept beneath the lowered blinds that hid the gay flowers on the balcony, yet suffered their sweet smell to enter through the open windows, spread itself softly over the carpet, and showed a woman's gold thimble lying there —then stole toward the shut folding-doors, from the other side of which not a sound or movement had come for hours. Here it seemed to pause awhile, as if afraid, then stealthily passed underneath them, and traversed an oddly-shaped apartment that ended in a place not much bigger than a large recess, and partly hidden by soft, pink muslin draperies, now pushed roughly on one side, and held there by something that had fallen heavily between them.

In pity seemed the light to touch it. There it

lay, a strong figure lying face downward with sunny crown abased, and brows pressed to the coverlid of a wide couch, upon which a woman was lying in a deep sleep, her head pillowed on her outstretched arm, a picture of perfect innocence and rest.

With the smooth coverlid drawn to her chin, and her air of happy dreams as she securely slept, she looked as if she had not stirred since she laid her down—as if, indeed, she would not stir now, did not someone come to wake her, though the light kept on ever widening, and growing, till the pink-hung room was full of a soft, rosy atmosphere fit for such a Princess as she, yet was strong enough surely to rouse the man who lay with arm doubled up beneath him, in attitude unnatural and strange.

Serenely the clock ticked away the moments and the minutes to hours; the Dresden china shepherds and shepherdesses on the mantel-piece had long ago nodded each other good-morrow, and the pictures on the wall exchanged glances, first of amaze, then of inquiry, as to who was the new-comer who disturbed their privacy, and come, alas, in such woful and uncourtly guise!

The white mouse, looking perchance for his absent little master, popped his pink nose out of the cage that was never very far from the Princess, and, aghast at what he saw, went in again.

In the street without, in the house within, the cheerful noises of everyday life began, and swelled each moment louder, so that when a footstep in the next room caused a vibration of the floor, she opened her eyes, and lay listening, and broad awake. The couch was so low that what lay at its foot did not come within her range of vision, as she fixed her glance on the folding-doors, watching for them to open, and her maid with the tea come in; and as she looked, one swung back, and through it came Rose, erect, *pimpante*, in her smart cap and apron, smiling, too, as if she had some especial cause for satisfaction that morning. But as she came forward something —something between her mistress and her, arrested Rose's attention; the cups on the tray in her hand rattled violently with the tremor that shook her, and shuddering, gasping, she backed away, with staring eyes fixed on *that*—backed till she came to the door, and escaping through it, shrieked—such a shriek as clove through wall and window, and made the passers-by stand still in the street, with that heart-quake which men know when tragedy stalks red-handed through their midst.

Meanwhile her mistress, guided by the woman's eyes, had raised herself, and by some dreadful instinct born of courage, felt herself drawn *toward* instead of away from *it*—so that on hands and knees she

crawled toward the still figure, which dumbly spoke its own eloquent message of eternal separation from her and all living things.

A hand's-breadth away from it she paused, looking down at the tossed, silky, fair hair set in a wide halo of blood—blood that had soaked and welled and ebbed for many an hour through the long summer night into the coverlid at her feet.

One arm was doubled beneath his chest just as he had fallen, the other lay stretched out to its full length, pale palm uppermost—a hand that would never sow or reap any more, never help or hurt anyone any more, never be filled with those gifts that the prime of a man's life well spent may reasonably be hoped to bring.

Steps were coming, people were coming, with a thundering, rushing sound, all hastening madly to that horror in the house, that smell of blood in the air that we call "murder!" and that we stand agape to look on, even while our flesh recoils at it.

The master of the house came first on that terrified wave of struggling humanity—came in to see the murdered man lying there, and his wife on her knees beside him—across the body their eyes met, and oh! what a look was there!

The glance of horror, wonder, and pity with which she had first gazed down at the murdered man, had

been swiftly followed by one of dawning comprehension, changing into one of passionate loathing and contempt. This, too, was gone, when her husband came, and their eyes leaped together.

"He thought me guilty, and he killed that hound —and he did well," she thought, with a wild sense of exultation that brought a strange light to her eyes, and a heave to her breast, and in that moment he saw her not as the Elizabeth he knew, but——

Breathless they gazed, in one lightning moment engraving on each soul the likeness of its fellow's guilt, then, without a sound, the woman shrank down, hiding her face and shuddering, away from him, and from life, alone, as it were, with herself and the dead.

Up they came, those people, surging up from without (who had set the house-door wide?) bearing the officers of the law with them into the dainty drawing-room, and through the folding-doors, that would hardly open far enough to admit them, pausing in the second room as in the auditorium of a theatre, the last room of all appearing a stage, with its two inmates posed in a silent and terrible *tableau.*

Outside it stood the husband, white, rigid, his arms folded on his breast, apparently as incapable of movement, or of speech, as what was lying at his feet.

Rose, the maid, recovered herself first. Pushing her way through the throng, and casting a look of contempt on her master, she stepped over the dead man with a shudder, then snatched up a silk dressing-gown that hung over the back of a chair, which, with a small table and the couch, completed the furniture of the recess, and threw it round the lonely figure that crouched on the bed.

Her mistress did not move while being wrapped in it, nor when she felt the slippers put on her naked feet; but when Rose tried to raise her, she got up with a quick, defiant movement, and sat down with the wide folds of silk draping her royally, looking past her husband at the rout beyond, as Marie Antoinette may have done at the crowd that surrounded her tumbril.

Yet her lips quivered—not for that poor dead man—her heart was hard as a stone toward him, and she had no thought of the suddenly arrested life, or of the pity of it, but because her husband stood aloof from her, because he had let the sin of blood-guiltiness hold him back from clasping her in his arms—because he could see her there alone, nor move one step to take his rightful place beside her.

"Let us bear it together!" was the anguished cry of her heart; then the pain passed, and a cold feeling of anger grew in her breast. If *she* could forgive

him, what quarrel had he then with her? In that moment she despised him—as a woman despises a man who does not rise to the occasion as she herself has done, ay, and higher yet, for however magnificent a woman's pluck may be, a man's should always be able to soar above it.

One of the policemen kneeled down and turned that quiet figure at the foot of the bed over, revealing a calm and handsome face, marred only by a small hole in the forehead, through which a bullet had passed, and out of which the life-blood had ebbed quietly away during the night.

Barry Ross had been a good-looking enough fellow in life, but in death his face took on a sweetness and majesty that brought tears to the eyes of many who looked down on him that day, bitterly resenting the foul injustice that had robbed him of his birthright—life. Rose, who stood with her back to the wall, glanced swiftly from mistress to master, and back again. Their faces told nothing; in fact so unnatural to the onlookers seemed their stony acceptance of the situation, without any of that display of amazement and horror which might have been naturally expected, that the conviction gained ground that both were "in the swim," and knew all about the night's work, and each other's share in it.

To Elizabeth St. George it seemed afterward

that she sat for hours in that alcove, facing the mouthing, staring multitude; but she could not remember what anyone had said, or what answers she had given to the questions put to her, for at her heart's tribunal was standing the man, once her lover, now her husband, who thus openly, by his silence and his desertion, accused her.

All things have an end, and at last the moment came when Rose was free to take her mistress away.

Gathering her robes around her, Elizabeth rose, and swerving a little to one side lest they should step on the body, and the crowd dividing for them, the two women passed through the rooms, and up the staircase, and out of sight.

CHAPTER II.

"Whaur shall I gae, whaur shall I run,
Whaur shall I gae to lay me?
For I hae killed a gallant squire
And his friends they seek to slay me."

It was Rose who locked her mistress into her bedroom, who got the house cleared of its uninvited guests, the body of poor Barry laid upon the bed that had not been slept in that night, and who, then, leaving her master still stupefied and alone in the place where he had stood throughout, returned to her mistress, and shut herself in with her.

Apparently he had not moved yet, when Mr. Skewton who had been telegraphed for from Scotland Yard arrived, and found him there, aged and lined, in the space of one hour, to such a likeness as his own mother would have found it hard to recognize.

Was it only last night that Elizabeth had said to him, "It is so close and hot upstairs, Jack, and Rose thinks I had better sleep downstairs to-night, do you mind?" and then she had rung for her maid, and Rose had made up the Chesterfield couch in

the recess off the second drawing-room, and she had said in joke how easy it would be for any one to come in and murder her, walking over the leads of the great library built out at the back.

He had proposed then that he should come down too, but this she would not allow. She knew it was all fancy, disliking her room at the top of the house so much, but he should not be allowed to suffer for it, and then she had gone gayly upstairs to undress, coming down presently in her dressing-gown, and with Rose in attendance, who placed on the table beside her bed the night-cap Mrs. St. George usually took the last thing at night. Jack always laughed at her for taking it—but take it she did, with the utmost regularity. It consisted of a teaspoonful of Jamaica ginger in hot water, with sugar, and on that particular evening there was barely enough for her usual dose in the bottle, and she told Rose to be sure and get some more next day. When the girl had gone to bed, Elizabeth had done some dancing steps in her flowing robe before a long glass, had frolicked around generally, cut some jokes, reviewed the events of the day, and finally, after kissing Jack, had drunk her nightcap and retired to bed.

"I shall come down in the night and see how you are," he had said, as he tucked her up, and

then she had asked him to leave the windows open in the second room, and the room beyond, and to close the folding-doors between. This he had done, returning to his books, but going in again to look at her later, and by the glimmer of the light, under the snow-white silk shade, he saw her lying there, lovely in her sleep, framed in the delicate pink with which the recess was hung, and he had kneeled down to kiss her pretty hair, and bless her with all his heart. And then—he still seemed to see her lying there, the house hushed in silence, and presently the stealthy sound of a man's step on the stair. He saw the outer door open, seemed to feel the pause before the folding-doors yielded to the midnight intruder's touch—saw Barry Ross standing there on the threshold, his sunny looks gone, his likeness changed from the man of honor to the renegade against his friend, and the brute in intention, he saw—O God! what more did he see as he turned away his eyes, shuddering? Presently he came nearer to the bed, now tossed and disordered, that had been so smooth when Elizabeth awoke that morning. He stooped over it—what business had he with it, and why did his hand steal to his breast as he arose again, starting violently at sight of the man who at that moment came through the folding-door with swift, silent tread, and eyes that

said, "You are mine—you have done murder, and I am here to prove it."

Jack's calm had broken at last, and with a vengeance. He sat down, or he must have fallen from excessive agitation, and if ever a man wore the livery of guilt, he wore it then.

The quiet, keen-eyed man laid his hand on Jack's trembling one, hidden in the breast pocket of his coat, and drew it out, with what it held.

"It" was a toy pistol of beautiful make and quality, and looked innocent as a child's plaything, lying in the detective's hand.

The shiver in Jack's limbs had passed, he looked afraid of nothing as he said:

"I don't deny it. I shot the man with that. Now do your duty."

Mr. Skewton's eyes narrowed.

He felt that he would have cheerfully paid a good deal to have entered the room three seconds sooner than he had done.

"Is this pistol yours?" he asked.

"See for yourself," said Jack, and Mr. Skewton looked, and found a name and date inscribed on the barrel of the pistol, and the name was Jack St. George, and the date over a year old.

"The sooner you take me away the better," said

Jack curtly, and turned on his heel and went into the other room.

Mr. Skewton, left alone, shook his head. There was a good deal more in this business than met the eye. He had naturally only an imperfect knowledge of the circumstances of the case, and the account of the enterprising constable who sent for him, had pointed to a woman in the case, whose absence from the scene puzzled him.

He followed Jack into the other room, where he stood looking out on the balcony with the sweet breath of stocks and mignonette in his nostrils, so that, ever after, the sight of those homely flowers turned him faint and sick.

"There is a lady in the case?" said Mr. Skewton.

"My wife," said Jack, briefly.

Mr. Skewton paused, and before the pause had grown wearying, Jack filled it up.

"My wife sometimes sleeps downstairs," he said, his face calm and resolute, "the weather has been very hot lately, and she was brought up in the country, and feels the poor accommodation upstairs very much."

"Why poor?" said Mr. Skewton, looking round, "these rooms are a very fair size. I imagine those above are the same."

"The rooms above are not ours," said Jack ab-

ruptly. "They belong to Mr. Barry Ross—who is dead."

"He was your lodger?" said Skewton.

"My lodger," said Jack proudly, "why not?"

Probably no man ever looked less like a lodging-house-keeper than Jack St. George did then, but then nobody surely was ever so little like a traitor and a hound as Barry Ross, and yet——

"H'm," said Mr. Skewton, stroking his chin, "and a friend?"

"So I thought him till last night. Listen. He loved my wife, though she did not know it, and before God I swear I never suspected him of the treachery in his heart. My wife went to bed, in that recess you saw, about eleven. I sat up reading for an hour, then went in to see that she was all safe, and went back. I had turned out the gas, and was about to cross the outer room to go upstairs, when the door communicating with the staircase opened, and someone came in quickly, and went through the folding-doors. He went straight to the recess—in the dim light I saw him—and in a second—in one lightning moment of fury—I shot him as he turned to face me, and he fell down dead across the foot of the bed."

"And your wife slept through all this?" said Mr. Skewton, incredulously.

"Don't you know?" said Jack in surprise. "She is deaf."

"A tragedy indeed," said Mr. Skewton, dryly; "but one would think even a deaf person would be wakened by a pistol-shot within a yard of her."

"But she did not stir," said Jack calmly, his always resolute jaw and mouth more resolute than ever.

"And after?" said Mr. Skewton.

"I went upstairs," said Jack.

"And then?"

For a moment Jack looked like one suddenly checked—at fault.

"What does the way in which I spent the latter part of the night matter to you?" said Jack, sharply. "I went to bed."

"To bed! Leaving that body as a pleasant surprise to your wife when she woke! H'm—and you shot an unarmed man. Had you a grudge against her?" he asked, suddenly.

Jack made no reply.

"Where is she?" said Mr. Skewton.

"Upstairs."

"You have had a conversation together since this —occurrence?"

"Not one syllable."

"H'm," said Mr. Skewton, "then she does not know who did it?"

"Yes—she knows."

"She knew," said Mr. Skewton keenly, "that you might have a motive for killing this young man?"

"Yes."

He said it defiantly, and as if he had put shame for her miles away from himself.

Mr. Skewton went out softly, called up a subordinate whom he left outside the drawing-room door, and ascended to the suite of rooms above.

He had already visited them, but now, after a glance at the quiet figure on the bed, he stepped up to the toilet-table.

"H'm," he said, "evidently interrupted by something or somebody in the act of undressing. Cravat thrown off, but collar still round his throat, his watch and money lying about. What's this? An envelope—and no postmark—a woman's writing, of course, a woman who is probably in the house."

He went down to the drawing-room with the letter in his hand.

"This is your wife's handwriting?" he said. "Mr. Ross evidently received this after he came in last night."

The young husband turned. He seemed to have shrunk in his clothes, and Mr. Skewton was answered instantly by the pale look on his face—a look

aghast, terrible, and which illumined and confirmed the theory that the detective had set up, perhaps disappointing him not a little, as at first sight there had seemed to be stranger circumstances in the case.

"After all," he thought, contemptuously, "it was a very simple murder, simple in its motive and clumsy in its accomplishment, and the course of justice will be swift and easy, so that no possible *kudos* can be attached to any detective concerned in it."

How could he tell through what furnaces of agony Jack was passing as he stood with back turned to him, motionless as a stone?

That bitter cry out of Scripture was ringing in his ears, that cry out of the far ages, that will ring on for ever, "*And it was even thou—mine own familiar friend.* . . . "

"A splendid fellow," thought the detective, mentally measuring his inches, "but who would have thought him coward enough to shoot an unarmed man?"

Suddenly he stepped back, and through the folding-doors, looking round with a glance that embraced everything, especially the window that Jack had left open overnight, and which was open still. Beneath it was part of the roof of the dining-room, and beyond it, and a trifle higher, a large expanse of

leads, bounded by the windowless backs of the houses in a by-street that ran at right angles with the leads.

Windowless? Ay, but in the brick-tiled sloping roof of one of these houses the quick eye of Mr. Skewton detected a single skylight, shut, it is true, but more than wide enough to admit the body of a man, while the drop to the leads below was not more than twenty feet. "The window open, and a skylight in another house by which any one could get in here, and go all over the house," said Mr. Skewton to himself, "if it were not for the pistol, and this man's damning evidence against himself — though he is too eager by half — I should say this might be a very interesting case indeed. Any way," his eyes remained riveted to the skylight, "it won't be such plain sailing as I supposed."

He had the more reason to believe himself correct in this supposition, when in the course of his travels round the room he discovered, and promptly annexed something that, however humble in itself, was destined to play an important part in the drama that had yet to be played out.

"And now for Mrs. St. George," he said.

CHAPTER III.

"The shallowest water makes maist din,
The deadest pool the deepest linn."

HE did not trouble any one to show him the way. The house was fashionably small, and he had already been twice in the second floor, so, unless on the roof, he must find Mrs. St. George in the top rooms of all.

He went boldly up, and passing the doors of two servants' rooms that stood open, knocked gently at the third one, which was shut.

No answer.

He knocked again and with the same result.

Then he said quietly, with his lips to the key-hole: "Your husband is under arrest for the murder of Mr. Ross."

A sound of voices, a rush as of a whirlwind, and the door was flung open to bring the detective face to face with a woman whom he afterward described as the "sweetest little morsel he ever saw in his life."

"You must be mad," said Elizabeth on the instant, "my husband came up to this room late last

night, and never left it till he was called from his bed this morning by that horrible news. If he had gone down again," she turned authoritatively to Rose, "you must have heard him, must you not?"

The detective turned to look at the girl addressed, looked her through and through, yet was conscious all the while of the narrow, low-pitched room, the unsuitable *entourage* of this woman, who looked as if born to rule in a palace. He observed, too, a smell of burning paper lingering in the air, and suspected mischief.

Rose looked at her mistress steadily, pityingly even, but returned no reply.

Mrs. St. George made a gesture of indignant anger, then turned fiercely on the man who stood there in the narrow way, forcing himself upon her in her own chamber. A sudden sense of the publicity in which she must henceforth live, smote on her chillily, and she felt that the sanctity of her home was gone, and privacy for her no longer existed.

"If any one is to be arrested," she said curtly, "arrest me. If any one in this house is guilty, I am that person."

"How did you do it?" he said, smoothly and raising his voice a little; "do you always carry fire-arms?"

She had set her face as a flint, but she could not

keep the look out of her eyes that told him what he wanted to know. He caught also an expression in Rose's face that he stored up for future unravelling.

"Mrs. St. George did not do it," he said to himself, "but her maid knows something about it. Then there is the skylight." Aloud he said, and producing an envelope from his pocket:

"Mr. Ross received a letter from you last night?"

"He did."

"It was delivered by one of your servants?"

"By my maid."

"Mr. Ross was not in, ma'am," said Rose, "and I placed the letter on his dressing-table."

"Where he found it at midnight—or later," said the detective to himself.

"Mr. Ross was a friend of yours?" he said.

"He was," she said, coldly; "but is this quite the place in which to catechize me?"

"If you will come down," he said calmly, "I will ask my questions under more favorable circumstances."

But she shrank back, and shook her head determinedly.

"When you come to take me away to prison, I will go down," she said, "but not till then."

And she made as though she would shut the door in his face.

"Softly," he said, not rudely or offensively, and indeed his manner had not been wanting in respect from the first, "if you will not come down, then I must speak to you here. You corresponded with Mr. Barry?"

"I did."

"Unknown to your husband?"

"Unknown to my husband."

"I may venture to inquire your subject?"

"You may not."

"Your letter was not of such a character as would bring him to your room at night?"

Elizabeth's eyes blazed—Rose's were cast down.

"What has this to do with your inquiry?" she said.

"Everything. If Mr. Ross obeyed such a summons from you, and your husband found him there—" the detective paused significantly.

Elizabeth's face blanched, and she seemed hardly to breathe.

"My husband never set foot in that room after he wished me good-night," she said.

"What time did he come up?" said the detective.

Elizabeth faltered, trembled.

"You were asleep," said the detective in his dangerously soft, suggestive voice. "He may have sat up reading late?"

"No," she said, boldly, "he may have thought me asleep, but I was not. It struck midnight just after he went upstairs."

"Did you hear your master come upstairs?" he said suddenly to Rose.

Rose made no reply.

"He came up at twelve, did he not, Rose?" cried Elizabeth, eagerly.

But only Rose's back answered the question.

"Your maid looks as if she had not been in bed all night," said Mr. Skewton. "At what hour did Mr. Ross usually come in?"

"At all hours. The latch was always left up for him."

"You saw him every day?"

"Very seldom."

"But he and your husband were on perfectly friendly terms?"

"Perfectly."

"And you also?"

She looked him full in the face, and paused deliberately before she said:

"Until last night."

The detective put up his hand.

"Stop," he said, "I am bound to tell you not to say anything that will incriminate yourself."

"When you have been trying for the last ten

minutes to extract every damning circumstance you can against me!" she said with a curious faint smile. "Listen——"

Rose came forward and caught at her mistress's arm.

"Madam," she said, imploringly, "don't! It isn't true—don't say it! Somebody may have come after the sapphires."

"What sapphires?" said the detective, quickly.

"They have nothing to do with it," said Elizabeth, "no one knows where I keep them, often I don't know myself. I hide them here, there, and everywhere."

"Then you always feared being robbed?" said the detective, his pulses quickened by this new element in the case.

Mrs. St. George looked indifferent.

"What was their value?" he said.

"About five thousand pounds."

"And you kept such valuable things lying about—here, there, everywhere?"

"There were only two stones," she said, indifferently.

"Two! They must have been very large to be of that value."

"They were," she said, carelessly, "so large that very few people thought they were real."

The detective glanced at the ill-proportioned room, a servant's room, however, beautifully furnished and kept, and his eyes expressed the astonishment he felt. With such jewels as those, how came she to give up the best rooms in the house for a paltry hundred or two a year?

"Where were they last night?" he said.

"Here," said Elizabeth, thrusting her hand into the pocket of her dressing-gown. As she did so, Rose turned her back, busying herself with tidying the room.

An ejaculation of amazement from the detective made her turn. She drew nearer, and a frightful change came over her face as she saw lying on her mistress's palm two glorious sapphires of enormous size, and in color the intensest, darkest, vividest, blue.

A low moan escaped her lips, instantly stifled, but as she turned aside to hide her face, Mr. Skewton caught a glimpse of it—a glimpse that told him much.

"Matchless," said the detective, "and you keep them rolled up in a twist of tissue-paper?" as she carelessly put them back in her shallow pocket. And for a moment he mused over the recklessness of women.

Rose Dupont had moved away, and was folding up, and putting straight the things lying about.

"Why did you not keep your sapphires in a safe?" he said to Mrs. St. George.

She looked at him, disdaining to answer, then said:

"Have you arrested my husband, and on what evidence?"

"Strictly speaking, he is not under arrest, but he is watched, and could not escape if he tried. The evidence," he touched his breast-pocket, "is here."

Elizabeth turned to that livid whiteness which betrayed mortal agony and fear. She tried to speak, but uttered only a hoarse sound that died in her throat; then, before he guessed her intention, with the delicacy of touch and lightning swiftness of a practised thief, she had dived for and snatched the pistol out of his breast-pocket, and put it behind her back.

It had been a moment's thought, an instant's work, not even knowing what she would find in the pocket he had so significantly touched; but the unexpected touch of the cold steel chilled her blood, and she trembled visibly as she stepped back.

Skewton, staggered for the moment, looked beyond Elizabeth to the maid. She stood like one petrified, and staring down at the toy weapon held behind her mistress's back.

"She never saw it before," he thought; then

aloud, "This is child's play, Mrs. St. George. No matter in whose hands that pistol is—your husband has confessed it to be his."

"My husband's?" she cried out as one pierced to the quick with pain, "that cannot be." She paused, and cold beads of sweat came out on her white brow. "He could only have seen it, and picked it up" (she spoke haltingly, finding words with difficulty as she went on), "after—" she drew a deep breath and stood defiantly erect. "I shot Barry Ross with it! Peace, I say! He came to my room last night —he always carried firearms—and I—I—snatched this from him, and shot him, the hound, as he deserved!"

"How came he with your husband's pistol?" said Mr. Skewton, quietly.

"Mr. St. George lent it him," said Elizabeth, boldly.

"No!" said Jack's voice behind them, "you are telling a lie, Elizabeth, a lie to save me. But this man will not believe you. He took the pistol from my possession, in which it had been ever since I fired that shot, and which your deafness prevented you from hearing."

"Am I so deaf?" cried Elizabeth, swiftly, and turning to the detective, "have I not heard every word you said? Does any one in his senses suppose

that I, who sleep so lightly, could sleep through such a tragedy as that?"

She turned from the man, and fell down on her knees beside her husband, clasping his cold hand and bowing her head down on it, clinging to him for dear love, and with a passion that shook her like a reed.

"Jack!" she said, "Jack, you know I did it! I was mad with rage at seeing him there, and I snatched the pistol from his hand—and I shot him —and after that I remember nothing—nothing."

He did not stir or speak, only the coldness of his hand chilled her—how could she know that he was thinking of Guinevere in her shame, as she bowed before Arthur, only Guinevere did not lie—she owned her fault.

"You are mad," he said at last, "to perjure yourself thus. No one will believe you, and there is Daffy. He loves you better than he loves me, and you have him to consider, as well as yourself."

He unlatched his hand, not roughly, but inexorably from her two clinging ones, and, deprived of his support, she sank down, the glory of her hair falling over his feet, and hiding her face.

What did his anguished eyes say as they looked down upon her? Does not the godhead in the man forgive, while the man himself in flesh and blood re-

volts at the thing that has shamed and betrayed him?

Suddenly he turned and went out.

. . . . . .

Rose stood looking down on the young figure that stirred no more than the dead, looked with eyes in which anger, amazement, and bitter disappointment struggled with some softer feeling that by and by drove out the rest, and brought her to her knees by Mrs. St. George's side.

"Madam," she said, gently, "madam," and tried to raise her in her arms.

But with a gesture of passion Elizabeth thrust her away, grown strong with the anger that filled her breast.

"You wicked woman!" she said. "Would you hang your master?"

Rose got on to her feet.

"Madam," she said, very quietly, "master has confessed, and that man evidently found the pistol in his possession. My testimony cannot possibly affect him one way or the other."

"He is innocent, I tell you," said Elizabeth, stubbornly, stupidly, like a child who in sheer recklessness persists in a palpable untruth. "He knew nothing of what went on downstairs last night—nothing until he was roused this morning."

Rose looked straight before her, her face divested of every particle of expression.

"Is it not so?" cried Elizabeth, seizing the woman's arm, and shaking it.

"Madam," said Rose, with a look of pity, "it was done in a moment of madness—of jealousy."

Elizabeth dropped the woman's arm, with a cry of loathing.

"Are you all mad together?" she cried. "I tell you it was I—*I* who killed him; but you will not believe me because you have, or had, some affection for me!"

"No," said Rose, calmly, "you did not do it; you were asleep. *Mon Dieu!* It is a piteous thing that you should be deaf, and wake to such a horror!"

"Piteous for my husband, you mean," said Elizabeth, hardily. "You think it was unnatural that I should sleep after I had done it? Oh, no! criminals are the soundest sleepers in the world. But if I had been wise I should have dragged him downstairs, and pushed him out into the street"—she laughed in a way that chilled Rose's blood—"and put the pistol in his hand, and people would have said—have said——"

She broke off suddenly in her speech, looking wildly around, as if she found her surroundings totally strange, and altogether puzzling to her.

Then she burst out singing :

"His hounds they lie down at his feet,
So will they their master keep."

She paused a moment, then her sweet voice went on :

"She got him up, upon her back,
And carried him to Carthen Lake."

Another pause.

"She buried him before the prime ;
She was dead herself ere even-song time."

Once again she began to laugh, but God in His mercy changed her laughter to tears, and so saved her reason.

CHAPTER IV.

"O, hear ye nae, frae 'mid the loch,
Arise a deidly grane?
Sae even does the spirit warn,
When we sune death maun mane!"

THE usual ghastly formalities that succeed a deed of violence were over. The preliminary inquiry before a magistrate had been held, and the strange spectacle of a husband and wife, each circumstantially owning to the sole committal of the same crime, had been witnessed, with the result that the woman was plainly proved to be lying, while the man's confession was borne out by solid facts.

Who shall decide the degree of guilt involved in that truth-murder, which has for its object the saving of another person's life? Certainly not the man for whom Elizabeth lifted up her pale face, and lied as if there were no God above, no judgment of man below, to punish her.

Jack heard her voice, indeed (all its sweet quality gone and hardened unto brass), but dared not look at her. This was not his Elizabeth, his deaf, beloved, little Elizabeth, with whose name purity and

goodness were synonymous terms; this was some unknown creature who had leaped to life in a single night, and that he knew not how to reckon with or to imagine.

So he kept his sunken eyes from her as she ranged from positive assertion to frenzied entreaty, and passionate arraignment of the powers who would not hearken to her, who scorned her word, ignored her cries, and finally swept her to one side, as men, intent upon the stern press of a man's work, will ever thrust woman, powerless thing at best, for much good or evil.

So Jack went to prison, fully committed for trial, and Elizabeth, raging at her helplessness, went home, with never a look or a word from Jack, to help her to bear her miserable lot.

In those days she thanked God that her few relatives were out of England, and that there were none to come and croak their dismal tale over her, and abuse her for the disgrace that had come upon her name.

For the world counted her a vile woman, and reckoned her, if not actually guilty of the murder, as the direct cause of it, and the friends who stood up for her in public were few indeed.

Do we not all know of cases in which a person may be so entangled in the web of circumstance, so

completely the sport of malicious accident and ill-luck that he is made to appear a guilty wretch, beyond the possibility of rehabilitation? He is innocent, but circumstances, apparently of the devil's making, are against him and he cannot explain, so he is branded for all time with a sin he has not committed, and another example of the way in which Providence invariably drops down on the wrong man is signally afforded.

But such an occasion brings a blessing with it in disguise. It weeds a man's friends from his mere acquaintance with startling despatch and completeness, and he may live to be thankful for the misfortune that so effectually winnowed the corn from the chaff.

Thus Elizabeth, a target to the world's scorn, in itself so much more secretly infamous than her most advertised wickedness could ever be, was profoundly touched to find that a few women, who knew her life and her, refused to believe that she was anything but what they had always found her. Such faithfulness was very sweet to her, and the friends who stood by her then she loved and valued to her life's end, and those who passed her by on the other side earned a sovereign contempt that wiped them out of her memory as if they had never been. And verily, do we not choose our friend for evil as

for good? No wrong-doing, or seeming of wrong-doing, should have power to loose the bond between us, and we should remember, even as God remembereth, that we are but dust.

"We will not be crushed—we will ride it out together, my heart and I," said Elizabeth, as in the loneliness of the house she stood erect, making up her mind what she should do, now that Jack was actually in prison.

And first she packed for him all that he could require—linen, clothes, books, wine—every sort of comfort that could make his quarters less grim, and when these were despatched she wrote a letter to a Bond Street jeweller, and within half an hour had received a reply in person.

The interview with Mr. Ezekiel did not last a quarter of an hour, but when he departed the sapphires (now in safe keeping at the Bank) had changed hands, and Elizabeth's sacred promise to Uncle Jasper was irrevocably broken.

But she was some thousands the richer, and able to procure the very first advocate in town for Jack's defence.

She had already made up her mind who that person should be. If she failed, and despair filled her at the thought, Jack might as well plead guilty, and be sentenced without the formality of a trial at all, for

Mr. Lemaire was probably the only man living who knew how to build up a defence out of nothing at all.

There is an expression, well known to perfectly appointed women, signifying "to dress as you go," and Mr. Lemaire usually constructed his defence as he went, gathering material from a witness's deportment, or a chance word or slip, and suggesting so much that his victim never intended, that often, when he began with no material at all, he acquired a great deal before the end was reached.

He might almost be said to possess the gift of divination when cross-examining the opposing witnesses, and even when he lost, as sometimes happened, lost with a *verve* and dash that made his failure how uncommonly like success.

Immediately after her interview with Mr. Ezekiel she drove into the City to see Mr. Latreille, reputed to be the sharpest solicitor in London, in criminal cases, and to him she entrusted her husband's defence, handing him a check for £1,000, and telling him to spare no expense.

He was so fortunate as to retain Mr. Lemaire, and subsequently employed days in seeing witnesses, sifting evidence, and making inquiries. He saw Mr. Skewton more than once, then went to Jack, and heard what he had to say.

It was perfectly simple and to the point, and the evidence against him was equally lucid.

"My wife means well," said Jack with stubborn lips, "but it is lost labor—and money. I intend to plead guilty."

Mr. Latreille's powers did not avail him here. He honestly believed Jack guilty, and saw not the smallest prospect of saving him.

He went straight to Elizabeth on leaving Jack, to tell her so.

A figure slim as a school-girl's, and the bluest, saddest eyes he had ever seen, greeted him; but perhaps what afterward astonished him most was, that having forgotten her deafness, and addressed her in his usual voice, she responded to every word he said.

"Your husband means to plead guilty," he said, when they were seated opposite each other, "and if he does, there is nothing more to be done."

"If he pleads guilty, you will say that he is insane," she said boldly, "and it is the truth, he was insane when he accused himself to save me."

Mr. Latreille looked at her with eyes that seemed to read her very soul.

"There must be truth between us," he said, "or I can do nothing. You did not kill Mr. Ross, and your husband did."

Elizabeth's face hardened.

"It is for you to prove that he did not," she said.

"Tell me," he said, changing his tone suddenly, "what servants had you at the time?"

"Rose, the woman who opened the door to you, and two other women, both ignorant and stupid, who rushed out of the house the day after the murder."

"This woman Rose," he dropped his voice, "she has been with you some years?"

"Several."

"She has your confidence?"

Elizabeth was silent.

"You are angry with her on account of the evidence she gave at the inquiry before the magistrate?"

Elizabeth's eyes flashed.

"Yes."

"But she gave it reluctantly. You would not have had her perjure herself?"

Elizabeth's eyes flashed again.

"Yes—for him."

Mr. Latreille looked at her keenly.

Fierce as a tigress in defending her lord, he thought, but if so fond of him, why Mr. Ross?

"Yet you have not turned her away?" he said.

"No, that would be unjust," said Elizabeth, coldly. "No doubt she felt it her duty to tell what she dreamt, supposing it to have really hap-

pened. She has been an excellent servant hitherto, and devoted to our interests."

"And knowing that you are angry with her," said Mr. Latreille, slowly, "she yet elects to stay. That tells in her favor."

"Yes," said Elizabeth, "she must surely have some sort of affection or pity for me, or why should she remain? No respectable servant can be induced to come here, and it is with difficulty that I have obtained a charwoman."

"She has some other reason for staying," said Mr. Latreille to himself; "a reason that is close by, or I'm much mistaken."

Aloud he said:

"You confide in her?"

"No," said Elizabeth, boldly.

"But that letter," said Mr. Latreille, disliking his task very much, "why did she destroy the letter you wrote to Mr. Ross overnight?"

Elizabeth's face grew haggard as he looked at it.

"Did she destroy it?" she said. "I saw her burn something, but did not know what. Why should she burn the one I wrote to Mr. Ross? It was only a few lines about a business matter." She stopped abruptly, and her color rose. "I did not ask him to come down that night," she said proudly, "but he came."

Mr. Latreille moved irritably.

"Could she—for of course you are aware she will be brought forward as a witness against your husband?—betray anything that would have a bearing on the case?"

Over Elizabeth's blue eyes a veil seemed to be insensibly drawn.

"If she were maliciously disposed, yes," she said, as calmly as if it were a more natural thing to own to guilt than innocence.

"You are very magnanimous," said Mr. Latreille, starting up; "take care you are not taken advantage of. If you are wise" (he dropped his voice to a whisper) "you will take advantage of her presence here to find out from her all you can as to her friends—and her lover. Of course she has one?"

"She is very reserved," said Elizabeth, wearily, "but I believe she occasionally walks out with some man."

"French?"

"I imagine so."

"She usually mixes your night draught?" said Mr. Latreille, carelessly, but his eye was keener than ever.

"Sometimes."

"She mixed one for you that night?"

"No," said Elizabeth, looking surprised. "I mixed it myself."

"Humph!" said Mr. Latreille again, "and you slept unusually sound?"

"I——" Elizabeth stopped abruptly, and Mr. Latreille muttered "almost caught," under his breath.

"I do not find you deaf at all," he said suddenly, "and judging by the events of that night I expected (pardon me) to find you almost stone deaf."

She looked up.

"I can always hear cultivated voices," she said, "and you speak very distinctly. It is the half-educated people and servants whom I cannot understand. My friends sometimes say to me, 'Why do you talk so much to So-and-so?' I say, 'Because he has a delicious voice, and I can hear him.'"

"Yet you did not hear the pistol-shot that night," said Mr. Latreille.

The thick fringes of her eyes fell suddenly, making answer neither negative nor affirmative.

"You are too young to live here alone, and in a place that has such dreadful associations," he said, looking round the pleasant room as if he expected poor Barry Ross's ghost to be hiding somewhere, "have you no relations to be with you?"

"No, thank Heaven!" said Elizabeth, lifting her startlingly blue eyes, two spots of sweetest color in the pallor of her small face.

"Or friends?"

"Some—but none to confide in. I have my trouble to bear, and I will bear it alone. Here I remain till Jack comes home, or——".

"Barry Ross was a good fellow?" he said abruptly.

Elizabeth stepped back as if Mr. Latreille had struck her.

"He was a hound," she said, with a gesture of fiercest loathing and repudiation, "a traitor and a coward, and he deserved what he got, and more—and more!"

Her blue eyes blazed, her slight form grew taller, she had leaped at a bound from a timid girl to an avenging goddess.

"Before God!" said Mr. Latreille, below his breath, "she is capable of anything—what if she has been telling the truth right through, after all?"

The moment of revenge, of fancied annihilation passed; it was but a young thing trembling in every limb who stood before him with slender hands held up to him in prayer.

"You will do your best for him?" she said.

"Yes—I will—but I tell you plainly I have little hope of getting him off. All I have to put against the overwhelming testimony to his guilt is one small scrap of evidence, that may be worth much, or nothing at all."

"If anyone can save him, you will," said Eliza-

beth, trying to still her quivering limbs, "and O! may God bless you if you do."

Mr. Latreille took her poor little fluttering hand, and held it fast between his two strong ones.

"You a bad woman?" he said, literally thinking aloud, "not a bit of it—a better one never breathed, for all your tantrums, and though you can tell a lie, and stick to it, too. And I'll do my best. So he won't see you, eh?"

"No."

"A pity," said Mr. Latreille, his side glance taking in all the pride and suffering of her face, "for I think——"

"Tell him," she said earnestly, "that I have but one favor to beg of him, and that I beseech him to grant it me—That he will plead 'Not Guilty.' That if he does so, if not acquitted, he may be punished for manslaughter only, and we will wait for him, Daffy and I, till he comes back to us—we will wait all our lives long if needs be. But if he refuses this request of mine——" she paused, and in her white face Mr. Latreille read her intention.

"I will tell him," he said, below his breath. "And I will come and see you again as soon as I have anything to tell you."

He pressed her hand. There were tears in his eyes as he went out.

CHAPTER V.

"O! thinkna ye my heart was sair
As I laid the mool on his yellow hair?
O! thinkna ye my heart was wae
As I turned about, awa' to gae?"

AND Barry Ross's place knew him no more. By the side of her dead boy his mother had kneeled and cursed his murderers, and when at last she had been suffered to take him away, she had buried him among his own people; and the names of Elizabeth and her husband were the most horrible of all names in her widowed and childless ears. For she believed, as did so many others, that the woman had coquetted with her son, had led him on, and then turned upon him, and either slain him with her own hand, or by force of the situation in which her husband found her, had actually constrained him to the crime.

If this woman were not guilty, why had she not come to her, the bereaved mother, as she looked on the dead face of her boy, and wept with her over him, as for a lost friend whom she had sincerely valued?

Mrs. Ross had not thought it strange that her son

should occupy some rooms in Mr. St. George's house; the two men had been at Eton and at Oxford together, and when one had married, and the other had remained single, the friendship had continued. Looking back, Mrs. Ross remembered that Barry had often spoken of Elizabeth, of how lovely she was, how good yet how full of fire, and how patiently she bore the deafness that had afflicted her from earliest youth. But she could recall no sign that he loved her, or gave her undue place in his thoughts, though she remembered, too, that he spoke in praise of no woman save Elizabeth.

Barry had never been known to do a shady thing in his life; he had been loved everywhere for his sunny looks and temper, for his sweetness of nature which had never suffered him to sin against anyone but himself; and now he lay in his grave, with a dark cloud of dishonor resting over him in the eyes of all save his friends, who swore that it was impossible he should have stolen down in the night on so base an errand as was said to be the cause of his death.

There were others—neither friends nor foes—who suggested that, when acting on a mad impulse, he had descended to the drawing-room, either struck with remorse or maddened by Elizabeth's reproaches, he had turned the pistol against himself;

but was it possible that after such an occurrence she should have slept calmly for many hours? Merciful souls said that in very truth she had not wakened at all that night, her deafness having placed her in the extraordinary position that she might be in the midst of a tragedy and know nothing of it, but that Jack, happening upon Mr. Ross there, and doubting both her and him, had slain his false friend, and left him there to silently tell his own tale.

Others, again, opined that a burglar, tempted by the sapphires, might have got in, and, surprised by Mr. Ross, had in self-defence shot him; but were a pistol in Barry's possession, was it not more likely that he would have shot the thief? And the weapon was St. George's, not Barry's

Again, burglars do not as a rule go anywhere without being pretty sure of their ground, and if they had received information from a confederate in the house, they would probably not have been surprised at all, but departed with the same ease as they had entered, and, in any case, most assuredly would have taken the sapphires; while the theory that the room had been entered from the skylight in the house looking on Mr. St. George's leads, fell to the ground when inquiry only elicited that the house was inhabited by an old rheumatic cobbler, who lived alone in it, and could only crawl about at a snail's pace.

His assistant slept in Marylebone Lane, and being duly followed there, it was proved that he had come home to his lodging as usual, had his tea, retired to bed, and come down at his usual time next morning, so that it was impossible he should have been inside the cobbler's house that night.

Elizabeth herself had never given the sapphire theory a thought. If she did not value the stones particularly, she sufficiently realized their worth to hide them in such a way that no outsider could positively know where to look for them, and as to the servants in the house, any of them could have robbed her at any time.

Jack simply hated the stones, and had protested against her accepting a gift that marked her out as a subject for violence, and possibly murder, besides being a perpetual source of anxiety to himself.

But a woman must be an angel who will refuse a priceless jewel that exactly suits her eyes and complexion, and, moreover, make her at once a target for the envy and malice of her kind; for wherever Elizabeth went, those two enormous sapphires—so enormous that they were seldom believed to be real save by those who knew her—riveted every eye upon her arm.

Two conditions had been attached to this gift, that she should never let them out of her own per-

sonal possession, and that she should never raise money upon them or sell them.

Gayly enough Elizabeth had made the necessary promises to her rich godfather (now dead), but long ago she had repented her of making either. Gladly would she have turned them into money, for Jack's progress at the Bar was slow, and food and house-rent were dear, so was society, and life in Town meant a perpetual disbursing of small and big coins, while the enjoyment purchased by the same was disproportionately small.

But she had given her word, and instead of breaking it, she had hit on a little plan by which she might obtain some money, and enjoy the bliss of pouring it all one day into Jack's brown hand, and so she had collogued with Barry, and confusion had come of it, and despair and death.

Long before that she had sacrificed her own comfort to economy in the house, that she might take a small cottage in the country where the fresh air, urgently required by a certain precious somebody, could be obtained, and so she had airily told Barry they had rooms to let, and he had moved into them gladly, not knowing the bad accommodation she had reserved to herself above.

To Jack an attic, with Elizabeth in it, was a palace, and he bore philosophically what caused her really

acute pain ; but she often went down to the cottage in Berkshire, as often indeed as her care for Jack permitted.

They had never fallen out of love with each other, these two—nobody had come between them during the five years of their married life, for theirs had been that perfect sympathy of heart and soul which makes united lives one long feast of delightful company. And who would have dreamed that any interruption to their happiness should ever come ?

And now she was alone—and friends and enemies alike marvelled that she could remain in that house, whose number and story were on every tongue, and that no one passed without a curious stare up at its pretty windows, as if expecting to see a ghostly tragedy enacted.

She who had once been so sensitive was surely not sensitive now, or she must have fled from it long ago ; but they did not know that her courage was stronger than her sensitiveness, therefore she remained.

When Jack came home—ay ! but would he bear to put up with her company always, if his prison-doors opened, and sent him forth a free man.

Elizabeth did not break down as some women would have done under the awful strain. Some

people go down under adversity, others are braced up by it. If she had an enormous capacity for suffering, she had also a good constitution, and that high-mettled courage which rises to the occasion, as the thoroughbred horse will respond to the call made upon him, even if, in accomplishing it, he burst his heart and die.

So her back grew to its burden, and if she wasted day by day, her spirit was yet unbroken and whole within her.

Nervous she was indeed, with that terrible physical nervousness known only to the deaf, who never grow accustomed to the strangeness of people appearing suddenly, without sound, before them, and who are weary with the perpetual strain of trying to hear indistinct or unsympathetic voices, that irritate and wound their ears.

Common people look upon a deaf person as only one degree removed from an idiot, and not only roar at him, but think it necessary to elaborately explain everything down to his limited intelligence; much as an Englishman when he is trying to talk French, holloas at a Frenchman.

It had come with such cruel swiftness on Elizabeth, and it had come to remain for ever. A bright, eager child, thirsting to be first in her school, overwork, a sudden chill, and then—silence to all the

sweetest sounds of nature, and the tenderest, most delicious notes of the human voice. To sit alone, while others laughed, to be the fool of her company when most eager to understand, to see life only from one narrow stand-point, and hear it not at all with

"Wisdom at one entrance quite shut out,"

this was the life of Elizabeth, and she had borne it, yea, and gayly, with love to turn all its broken promise to gold; but now that love was gone, the silence seemed to touch her heart, and she shrank farther into her chilly loneliness, as one who could never be warm again.

Did she ever seem to hear poor Barry's step on the stair as she sat alone, listening to inner voices and sounds that no other might hear? Did she sometimes look up, half-expecting to see him standing beside her, pale, with reproach in his eyes, asking her if he had ever, through all their years of friendship, used her once discourteously?

"O! my God!" she cried once, with a passion she rarely showed, "why did I go downstairs that night?"

And then she had started to find Rose beside her. Rose, whose clear voice she could always hear, who had studied her comfort and health continually, and who, in her own reserved way, seemed

sincerely attached to the young mistress who was so dependent for consideration on those around her, and whom no one could be with long without learning to love.

Elizabeth looked searchingly at the woman, as she deftly arranged her tea on a small table near. Why did she find it a constant struggle now to be kind to her? Was the difference in herself or in Rose?

The latter did not speak, and something in her silence, and her averted head, struck Elizabeth painfully, and a sense of profound humiliation stung her through and through. She was a woman deserted by her husband, and dependent for sympathy on a servant who seemed about to fail her.

Did anyone of the friends who clung to her absolutely believe her innocent? And was this woman, who had lived about her person, and knew all her ways, at once sorry for, yet doubtful of her too?

Whither should she turn in her desertion and loneliness? was she not in as piteous plight as the ruined heir of Linne?

> "O, see, for he stands on the cauld causay,
> And nae ane bids him come in!"

Ay! but like the broken, weary, friend-forsaken youth, she "minded her" of something.

"His mither left him a little wee key
A little before she de'ed ;
And bade him keep the little wee key
Till he was maist in need."

And the key fitted the hidden door, in which the Lady of Linne had stored away muckle gold against the time of her son's ruin and repentance, and so he became rich again, and, let us hope, sinned no more.

So now Elizabeth, bethinking her of her own secret treasure, flung aside the self-restraint that she had fought so hard to maintain, and with a long, sobbing sigh of love and longing, covered her face with her hands.

"Daffy, . . ." she said, below her breath, "I want you, my little love, my dear. . . . I can't live without you ; . . . and your little feet will dance just as happily here as there; . . . and you will not know; . . . so you must come, Daffy, for we are all alone together now, you and I."

CHAPTER VI.

"Below, my boy, I'll weep for thee ;
Too soon alake ! thou'lt weep for me !
Thy griefs are growing to a sum,
God grant thee patience when they come."

"WHERE my rocking-'orse ?" said Daffy, when, on his arrival, his mother and he had hugged and kissed each other almost out of breath, and paused awhile before they began it all over again.

Tragedy had stalked through the house and swept the master of it and his friend away ; but the child, finding his mother and his rocking-horse all safe, was content.

She took his little, eager hand and went down-stairs with him to the room that was indifferently called the housekeeper's and the day nursery, and where Daffy's toys flourished in great disorder and abundance, and sat down in the dingy room, while the four-year-old boy rode his horse boldly and fast, his golden curls flying, as with voice and whip he encouraged his steed to increased effort.

As she looked at his chubby limbs, the roses on his cheeks, and the clearness of his blue eyes, she

thought how selfish she was, for her own pleasure, to bring him to this house where he never thrived, and where, indeed, she was never able to keep him for very long.

Town life did not suit Daffy, and the greater part of his time was spent in the country with his nurse, Dolly. If Elizabeth had loved Jack less, she would have passed mostly her existence there too; but she had never placed the child before his father, and so had to endure the misery of being nearly always without the company of one or the other. The real satisfaction in her life lay in Jack's holidays. When all three went away together she was happy, with that intensity which only a brief tenure of happiness can bring.

"Mother," said Daffy, pausing in his management of his steed to look at her anxiously, "has 'oo been ill?"

"No, my sweetheart," she said, bravely, "but London does not suit mother very well."

"Come down in the counfy," said Daffy, nodding, "lot's o' cows and pigs, and such *dear* little chickens! Dolly's *promised* to take care of them. Why didn't Dolly come too?" he added, anxiously, "can't get 'long without Dolly!"

"She is taking care of the cottage," said Elizabeth, "won't mother do for your nurse, lovey?"

"O, yes!" shouted Daffy, scrambling down to kiss her fondly; "where my little white mouse?" he added suddenly, as if struck by a thought.

"Upstairs," said his mother, "all safe."

"And you haven't *'tarved* him?" said Daffy, anxiously.

"No, dear one. I have seen that he was fed every day."

And so she had. Through all that had happened her child's one town pet had never been forgotten; and not for a single day had his glass crock been left unfilled with bread and milk.

"Good mummy," said the boy, as he climbed into her arms and drew her head down to his.

She closed her eyes that he might not see the tears that came into them. With his cheek pressed against hers she was in heaven, and would have liked to rest thus for ever.

"Daddy coming 'ome early?" said Daffy, squeezing his velvet embrace still closer round her neck.

"Not to-day, lovey," she said, her brief spell of joy over. "Daddy is—is away just now."

"Why you not gone too?" said Daffy, sitting up, and looking earnestly at his mother.

"He has gone on—on business, Daffy."

"O!" said Daffy, only half-satisfied, but anxious,

as usual, not to appear ignorant. After pondering awhile he said :

" Barry gone away too ? "

" Yes," said Elizabeth, putting up her hand to her throat as if something choked her.

" He *promised* me a new rocking-'orse," said Daffy, with grave displeasure. " Jest like a Shetlun' pony —with a hairy skin and a real tail—does 'oo sink he's forgotten it ? "

She bowed her head on his neck to hide her eyes —she could not answer him.

" P'r'aps he'll come 'ome before I go away," said Daffy, cheerfully, " 'ope so—Barry and me used to 'ave velly 'igh jinks—that's what *he* used to call 'em—*I* used to call it fun."

She had forgotten how good Barry had used to be to her boy ; . . . how they had played, and romped together ; how, one night, on going up to the nursery, she had found Daffy with his golden head on his friend's shoulder, saying his prayers, and Barry listening reverently.

Something struck against the stony rock of her heart then, and pity gushed out, pity for the man to whom she had been so merciless, whom she had condemned unheard, knowing the powerlessness of the mute lips to open and clear him of the charge with which he had been dishonored.

Soon the little busy feet were stumping upstairs again, this time to the drawing-room, where, in a hidden corner, known only to himself, Daffy had left an "ingin" that was inestimably dear to his faithful heart.

Elizabeth could not stop him with any show of reason; so she followed him over the threshold of the darkened room, yes, even through the folding-doors and right up to the recess, where Daffy fished out his battered treasure, and hailed it with rejoicing.

But coming away he missed something, and paused.

"Where is your bed?" he said, "does you 'member, mummy, when us s'eeped down 'ere one night, cos you said you couldn't s'eep upstairs? How us did *enjoy* ourselves!"

And he hugged himself up together at the memory of it.

"Dolly says," he added, shaking his dear little fair head, "you oughtn't to s'eep down 'ere by your lone self—naughty man might get in and hurt you, wiz no Daffy 'ere to take care o' you!"

"Come and see the white mouse," she said, and led his dancing steps downstairs to the dining-room.

The "Pink 'un," was glad to see his young mas-

ter, and did not bite him with his tiny teeth, as he usually did Elizabeth when she explored his box with her forefinger. For awhile she sat and watched the little animal frolicking round Daffy's small person—popping in and out of his frills, and playing at hide and seek in his curls—having by no means that horror of mice shared by most people, and simply loving all animals, great and small.

Then came his dinner—for he had arrived early—and then he went to sleep, and Elizabeth watched by him, his dimpled hand held fast in hers.

He would be almost entirely in her care now, for she had thought it best for his nurse to remain in the country, and Rose had more than enough to do already, now that she was maid and parlor-maid combined.

Despair had lately made Elizabeth his prey, but the cloud was lifted now, as she looked upon the dear little companion all her own, whose happiness he entirely made, and who must in future make hers.

In her misery she had hardly dared to think of this one priceless treasure remaining to her, and now she humbly thanked God for it, and vowed that the touch of this little hand should hold her back from falling into such hopeless abysses again.

When Daffy awoke he expressed himself ready to

go out for a walk, and when dressed called upon Rose to fetch his mother's hat.

"Not to-day, lovey," she said, "mother's tired. Rose will go with you."

Daffy hung his head, bitterly disappointed. But all his little life he had thought of his mother before himself, and now he did not urge his own claim, but, with a loving air of protection, led her to a sofa, where he made her lie down, and having stuffed every pillow in the room under her head, and carefully covered her feet with a large antimacassar, and softly kissed the tip of her nose, he went away on tiptoe with Rose, keeping up an appearance of cheerfulness to the last. Elizabeth lay listening to the little hushed steps as they went out of the door, and in fancy she passed with them up the street. Would every one who met him look coldly on the child for his mother's and father's sake? Was that little golden head to be bowed with shame already, for a sin that was not his?

But if such glances fell, Daffy did not know it. He had not gone far when he stopped, puckering up his nose and brows. "Got a pain in my shoe," he said, "take it out for me!"

Rose looked softly round. Only ordinary dawdlers and passers-by were to be seen at the corner where they stood—the corner of a street that led at

right angles to the house at the back of No. 13. "We will go to the shoemaker and have it taken out," she said, and he trotted along, well satisfied, beside her, down a small piece of street, across some mews, and into a narrow alley, where the few shops and tenements were poor and mean.

Once more she glanced swiftly round, then stopped at the door of a cobbler's shop, and without waiting for an answer went in.

An old man, sitting at his bench, looked up at the smart Frenchwoman, and gruffly asked her business. A young one, who worked with his back turned to them, did not even lift his head.

"This little boy's shoe pinches him," said Rose, "will you see if you can make it more comfortable?"

Daffy's mother wished to keep him a child as long as possible, so he still wore petticoats—white, fresh, worked petticoats, that looked out of place in the broken chair, upon which the cobbler set him, before kneeling down to remove his tiny shoe.

Rose stood looking carelessly about her, her glance presently falling on the dark unkempt head and profile of the man who worked doggedly on, not even taking the trouble to notice the smart bit of French prettiness, exquisitely neat and dainty, behind him.

"It's *dorn* now," said Daffy, with a sigh of relief,

as, after certain punchings and hammerings, the now easy shoe was fitted on, and he followed Rose contentedly enough to the door, to which she had insensibly drawn the cobbler.

"Your assistant looks very ill," she said, as she paid the sixpence demanded, "what ails him?"

"How do I know?" he said, irritably, "he was the best workman I ever had till this murder round the corner, and when they came prying here about skylights and what not—though no one has used that attic these ten years—he seemed to get the affair on his nerves, and he has been drinking and playing the fool ever since. But he is French—as you see, and foreigners are a rum lot;" with which ungallant speech he disappeared back into the shop.

CHAPTER VII.

"She wiled him into ae chamber,
She wiled him into twa;
She wiled him into the third chamber,
And that was the warst ava."

IT was curious how often Daffy's shoe wanted mending, and how many sixpences were spent in repairs at the cobbler's round the corner.

But the old man who sat nose and knees over his bench, going doggedly on at work that seemed always interminable, and which seldom brought in much money, always turned the child over to his assistant, and spoke gruffly to him and Rose, having no desire, now he knew their identity, to see them there at all.

He had been angry and offended at what he considered the intrusion of the detectives on the privacy of his skylight, or rather, on the attic beneath it, and blamed the whole tragic affair as a direct injury to himself, and done on purpose to annoy him.

What right had people from the "Yard," dressed up to look like gentlemen, poking about his bits of

things, hunting for footprints in the dust (as if he were more dusty than other people, indeed), and measuring the wall outside to see its depth, and if it had any scratches on it, as if, at his time of life, he wanted to go climbing up and down it like a chimpanzee?

And it was an insult too, to ask him if he ever went out in the evening to fetch a drop of beer—couldn't a man who had lived forty years in one house do as he liked? Why, it was interfering with the liberty of the British subject, and a thing by no means to be abided. And as to dragging up an old man like him to give evidence at the trial, he didn't mean to go, unless he were carried, and not to speak then, if he didn't choose.

So when Daffy came in like a sunbeam, bringing his prattle and smiles into the dusty place, the cobbler seemed to have put some of his own wax in his ears, and neither heard nor saw anything.

To be sure, Janin's bench was behind him, and that chattering Frenchwoman sometimes dropped into her own lingo, which, of course, no one there could understand save herself, but the sixpences were certain, and he could not afford to turn money from the door. And she was a good customer; she ordered as many as four pairs of new boots and shoes for herself and Daffy, during the month that elapsed

between the committal of Jack St. George and the day of trial, boots and shoes that were fitted, and tried on, or returned and called for, till Daffy began to grow pale from the amount of time he spent in the stuffy little place. Janin's sombre eyes, resting on him, began to alter their expression strangely, so that one day, when he was kneeling down, Daffy ventured to put his hand on the man's swart head, and leave it there. "It's very 'ot," said Daffy, shaking his own, and the man, looking up from beneath the little hand, held his breath as if the angelic innocence of the blue eyes pierced his heart, and let a shaft of daylight into a pool of blackness and despair.

"It aches, little master," he said.

"Like mother's," said the child, with quivering lips; "she's always got a dreffful pain *here*"—he pressed his hand down in the centre of Janin's ebony locks, "and it won't let her sleep — not never."

Janin did not stir as he kneeled there, one palm pressed on the floor, the other still holding the half-fitted shoe on the child's foot.

"And I gets a pain too, sometimes," said Daffy, sorrowfully, "can't bear to see mother miserbul, and Daddy *never* comes 'ome."

The tears rolled down Daffy's cheeks, and his

heart heaved beneath his white worked pelisse as if it would burst.

Janin put up his grimy hand as if he would brush the tears away; then with something like a groan, he bowed his head lower over the shoe, and drew it on, beginning to fasten its tiny laces with trembling hands.

Rose had looked on, pallid and fierce, during the little interlude, and now she said something swiftly to him in French, which he seemed neither to hear nor heed.

Meanwhile Daffy, who was a brave little person, swallowed his tears, and had quite composed himself when Rose took his hand to lead him away.

"Good-by, Janin," he said, turning to nod his golden head as he went out, but Janin had turned his back, and made no sign.

Daffy's heart ached as he went along, and his shoes ached a little too, he thought, and he wished it was his mother's hand he held, and not Rose's, for Rose did not love him—he knew that in the core of his heart, though she was kind to him enough—and he and "mother" used to have such gay little walks and talks together!

He wondered so much why she never came out now—she was not ill in bed, for she could run about and play indoors with him, but she always put him

off with "To-morrow, perhaps!" Only to-morrow never became to-day.

"You must not talk to that common man, Master Daffy," said Rose, as they went away along the mews that began at a few doors' distance from the cobbler's. Had they turned to the right, it would have brought them in less than a minute to the door of No. 13, and Daffy objected to this roundabout way of going home, and once tried to explain to his mother that Rose brought him "miles an' miles" out of the way. But Elizabeth did not understand, and indeed for the first time in his life Daffy found a difficulty in engaging her attention.

For the day of the trial was then near at hand, and, so far, Mr. Latreille had discovered nothing to loosen the halter that Jack had placed round his neck, but the promise had been wrung from him that he would not plead "Guilty."

"If you do," Mr. Latreille had said plainly, "you take three lives—not one."

"What do you mean?" said Jack, the blood ebbing from his heart, and leaving him pale as a corpse.

Mr. Latreille repeated word for word Elizabeth's message, and filled up her pause according to his own impressions.

"She would not do it," exclaimed Jack in horror, "she is the gentlest creature—" and then he remem-

bered what she had done, and measured possibilities by facts.

"The gentlest women are invariably the fiercest on occasion," said Mr. Latreille, "and—she will keep her word. So now you know what such mad pleading means."

And Jack did know—he was beginning to know of what stuff Elizabeth was made.

Mr. Latreille's mind was eased on that score, but he felt that though he did his best, that best would be bad.

True he had accumulated certain evidence, and had one trump card in his hand; but he knew well enough how serious was the weight of evidence on the other side, and Mr. Lemaire, too, reflected, not without some acerbity of spirit, that, if he failed, all the world would be there to see.

For was there not a chance that Mrs. St. George would appear in court, and try to reassert those extravagant self-accusations that were the punishment she chose to inflict on herself for her unlawful loves?

She had been clever enough in the device of getting her lover actually domiciled under the same roof with her (fancy a woman with those jewels finding it necessary to take a lodger!) but with all her cleverness she had been found out.

And if she appeared, then there would be a scene, and the public loves a scene, and while individually humane, collectively gloats over the terror, anguish, and guilt of a fellow-human soul. The attitude of a mob or crowd toward any hunted thing must convince the most hopeful among us how much nearer we are in our attributes to the beasts than the god, and for one who will stand forth to champion the defenceless, there will be a thousand ready and willing to stone him down.

But neither friend nor foe knew what Elizabeth intended to do on that day.

Nor did Mr. Lemaire know what he was going to do, either.

CHAPTER VIII.

"What sudden change is this," quoth he,
"That I to love must subject be,
Which never thereto would agree,
But still did it defy?"

JACK had given up his tense attitude of listening for those light steps that never came, which indeed he had forbidden to come, but that he had expected all the same, with a longing that turned to aching as the days went by.

He had sent Elizabeth a message that he would not see her at any time, that the prison officials would not admit her, no matter how loudly and long she beat for admission, and she had not beat so much as once and softly—and the terrible silence filled his ears, and heart, and soul, as he sat there day after day, and week after week, alone.

But Elizabeth was very proud, and once he had shut the door against her, no prayer for the reversal of his sentence would ever cross her lips. The woman who clamors in vain, inflicts on herself a double pang, for the loss of self-respect is even more bitter than the refusal of what she demands.

And Jack could not call her back. In these long days of loneliness he was living over again the time when he and his little Elizabeth had dwelled together in a world out of which every one else was shut, save Daffy; when he was as sure of her love and faithfulness as his own; when his knowledge of her goodness (for who could live with, and doubt her?) made him think tenderly of all women for her sake, and in the best sense of the word she had made his house a home, and shrined him deep in the purest heart he had ever known.

Whatsoever thing is defaced and broken was it not clean and whole once? There must be a beginning to all moral defilement; but looking back, Jack could find no lightest sign to mark the decadence of all things lovely, and of good repute, in Elizabeth.

He thought of her always now as one thinks of somebody dead, for the new woman who had risen in her stead was not Elizabeth, and he knew her not.

He wondered if her mother's love had gone by the board with the rest — yet in the same breath hoped that Daffy was taking good care of her, Daffy, whose firm conviction it was that she needed a great deal of taking care of, and whom he consequently led over crossings, to his own imminent danger, and hers, very often. He was also most

particular to explain every thing said by the shopmen who served her, and his high, clear, little voice often brought some amusement, and a good deal of gentle commiseration down on the head of Elizabeth, whose chief misery in her misfortune was the constant reminder of it she got whenever she moved abroad or saw new faces. Daffy did not know this, but he secretly felt himself a much older and more experienced person than his mother, and never failed, on going out, to tell the servants "to take care of mother," as if she would be in serious jeopardy until he came home again.

But strange and true it was, that the moment those little feet came into the house, however far away, Elizabeth always felt and knew they were there, and she could always hear his voice a long way off, though a wall seemed built round her to ordinary sounds.

Night and day Jack thought of these two—his only two in the world—and sometimes he wondered if they prayed for him now, . . . they did, they must, just as his own lips framed the same prayer each night that they had done in the days of his happiness.

One prayer he had added, that on the day of the trial he should not look up to behold her face. The sight would unman him, and he required all his

strength ; still, if he had been able to endure what he had done, his back would grow to the burden of the rest. If, indeed she were there, he wondered which face she would wear ?—the one that he had known and worshipped, or the other, all disfigured and branded, as it had been that awful morning, with the terrible stamp of—but his thoughts seldom got further.

Often, too, he thought of Barry, the fast friend of over twenty years, who had remained his friend long after both had outstripped the ephemeral friendships that had strewn their paths, and whom he had taken into his house as carelessly and securely as if he were his other self.

True they had met but seldom. Barry dined each night at his club, and their morning hours of going out were not the same. It had, moreover, been an understood thing that there was to be no running in and out of each other's rooms, and a message was always to be sent to know if one could receive the other. This rule had always been adhered to, and Jack could scarcely have told how it was that such meetings had become rarer and more rare—only one day, when Elizabeth was sitting working apart, too far off to hear their voices, shut in within those walls of deafness in which she somewhat sadly dwelt, and in whose coldness she must have perished, but

for the love that surrounded her, Jack caught a look on Barry's face, quite unconscious, but betraying such a hunger of love and devotion as flashed upon him an altogether disagreeable and unexpected revelation.

The look was gone in a moment: the next, Barry presented the spectacle of an ordinary young man intently watching a young woman in the act of threading her needle, threading it, too, as if she loved it, as Elizabeth assuredly did.

Jack had pondered long over the circumstance, loth to put into words what he had seen, and supposing Elizabeth to be perfectly unconscious, he felt it impossible to speak to her on the subject. And Barry? He thought he had not known his friend's heart all these years for nothing. Then a few weeks had gone by, and suddenly, without the warning of a moment, had come the catastrophe.

He saw before him now that friend's face, vivid in death, and in his ears a desolate voice rang out, "His sun went down while it was yet day."

Ay! but it had not gone down, it had been quenched all too soon, as it rode in mid-heaven, and the pity of it would overcome Jack at moments, as with all the strength of his soul he would wish his friend back, and that one lightning moment of crime undone.

In fancy Barry once more walked beside him, as in those constant days of companionship when they, and the world, were young, and their hearts were fresh as their hopes were high; when they mapped out their lives in glorious fashion, and vowed to make themselves known by all manner of brilliant deeds, and great thoughts, and now—Barry had died before ever attaining to fame, and Jack's only grand achievement (as he thought it) was when he persuaded deaf little Elizabeth to be his wife.

Would he have loved her so much if Nature had extended her cruel stepmother's touch on the girl's ears to the lines of her face and figure? I trow not. Men will do a great deal for what pleases them, but nothing at all for that which pleases them not. And deafness is an unbeautiful thing, and needs much love and patience in those who have to bear with it.

Poor Elizabeth used to say that deaf people were sent into the world to practise patience themselves, and discipline others to patience also; but Jack would not have changed her for the most perfect person, mentally and physically, in the world. But that was then, and this was now. And on the morrow his cell would be empty, and he standing in the dock.

CHAPTER IX.

"O, gentle Maurice, still my bairn,
O, still him with the keys!"
"He winna still, fair lady,
Let me do what I please."

A MESSAGE from Elizabeth to Jack was even now outside his door, though he did not know it, and, indeed he seemed to come out of a stupor, in which he had heard no sound of locks unbarred, to see a light figure all in white (save where the gold of his hair was shining) come dancing in, and flutter into his arms, with an ecstatic cry of "*Daddy!*"

Jack thought himself mad at last, but here was no visionary touch, only a very real pair of loving arms throttling his neck, and soon he realized that this was indeed his own little child in the flesh, and nestling his head into the soft neck and curls, could have wept for the joy and anguish of the moment.

"Daddy," said the boy, "my *own* dear daddy, won't you come along 'ome with me, and see mother?"

Jack did not answer, only pressed his face down closer, and smoothed with hungry hand the soft

head lying so close with lips warm against his throat.

"Poor mother," said Daffy, with a catch in his voice, "she's growed quite *finn*, and said she was so welly tired she couldn't jest come out to-day."

Jack's broad chest was heaving, he was struggling for the mastery of himself, and when he had got it, he unloosed Daffy's arms, and put him back so that he might kiss him.

"How do you like my new house, Daffy?" he said.

"O—oh!" said Daffy, looking round with much interest, and speaking in the wise little voice he usually affected, when not quite sure that he knew his subject, "there's lots of room for bat and ball. Shall us '*ave* a little game, Daddy?"

"Another time, my boy," said Jack, steadying his voice; "but who brought you?"

"Rose! She's outside with such a funny old man —got such lots and lots of keys! I wanted to bring the mouse," he went on; "he's so full of tricks, and growed such a *rediklous* person!" (He paused to laugh indulgently.) "But mother thought he might get out—and she have careded for him so, and fed him *every* day."

Daffy himself looked exquisitely cared for, and a very picture of health and happiness as he sat on his father's knee.

He had been born healthy, and passed triumphantly through all the lovely gradations of a joyous babyhood to the sweet dignity and majesty of four years old—the most delicious age, probably (to his mother), in a child's young life.

Jack felt the soft warmth of the dear little boy like the blowing of a soft wind on a poor wretch scrammed with cold and hunger, and for awhile he only held him fast, saying no word.

But presently:

"Did mother send any message?" he said.

"O' course!" said Daffy, holding up to his father's gaze a face upon which the very print of Elizabeth was set, "lots and lots of kisses, and thanks with cumplements!"

"Thanks with cumplements" was Daffy's invariable formula for extra fervid love.

"Daffy," said Jack, holding the little fellow away from him, "are you quite sure? Can you remember if it was only one kiss, or heaps and heaps?"

Daffy knitted his soft brows, and put the best part of a tiny kid glove in his mouth to assist memory, but at last committed himself to the bold assertion that his mother had said thousands—not heaps and heaps.

Jack sighed.

"I've got a message for mother," he said. "Will

you tell her, Daffy—now try and remember it—that I read in a paper the other day that some things are sold how to make people hear—and I should like her to buy some. I'll write the address down, and put it in your bosom, and you'll be sure and give it her?"

"O' course," said Daffy with an important air. "New ears for poor mother—but she always hears *me*."

Jack wrote the address down—just that, and no more—and pinned it against the boy's soft warm neck.

Did he think, as he did it, of how little she would care to hear, when he would be deaf to all sound for ever? Of how her life was to go on, while his was violently cut in twain before her eyes? And possibly his message came more in cruelty than in love.

"Were you frightened at coming down to this strange place?" said Jack, presently.

"O, no!" cried Daffy, with a burst of glee. "Me dancy down the steps in the City!"

The ignorance of the child, his unconsciousness of anything strange in his father's surroundings, brought tears to Jack's eyes.

"And mother," he said with trembling voice, "does mother play, and have games with Daffy now?"

"Mother tries," said the boy, the corners of his

lips falling, "but she says—mother says she don't *fink* she's quite so young as she used to be."

"Does she ever go out?" said poor Jack.

"Not never; and it's welly lonely," went on Daffy, shaking his head, "and Mr. Woss has goneded away; but my dear little white mouse is so pretty—prettier nor ever!"

A warning knock came at the door.

"'Spect that's Rose," said Daffy, wrinkling up his nose expressively; "she always 'urries me; she won't let me talk to Janny."

"Who is Janny?" said Jack, snatching him up, and covering him with kisses, some of which surely must find Elizabeth.

"He takes the pains out of my shoes," said Daffy, as the door opened a very, very little way, as if a kindly hand sought to gently remind him that time was up.

"I wish," he added, wistfully, "he could take mother's pain away too, she says it aches just *here*," and he spread his hand out expansively above his smart sash.

The door opened wider; Jack clasped the boy in a last embrace, and set him down.

"Tell your mother," he said, "your mother——"

In the distance was heard Rose's voice softly calling to the child.

A sudden impulse seized Jack; he strode to the door, and there, just behind the gaoler, stood the French maid, her face white in the dusk, as she cowered away at sight of her master. What did that look and attitude mean—of what was she in fear? Him? A poor wretch who might beat his own life out against his prison bars, but who had no power to harm her or any other now?

"Your mistress is well, Rose?" he said.

"She is as well, sir, as she can be."

He did not remove his eyes from her face.

"Time's up," said the gaoler, not unkindly, and Daffy, recognizing him intuitively as an enemy, clung round his father, and hid his face in his knees.

Did those little tender hands make Jack think of those others that he had so remorselessly unbound a few short weeks ago?

I know not—but when Daffy was borne away, sobbing bitterly, by the woman whom Jack felt he could no longer trust, with a newly added pang the husband realized how utterly alone and friendless his little Elizabeth was now.

CHAPTER X.

"Work thou within, we'll work without,
And I'll be sworn we'll set thee free."

JACK glanced swiftly round the court and found it empty, for Elizabeth was not there.

Thank God that she was not, that she did not hear herself called in open day what all, save her own friends, believed her to be; and though later on she would read the newspaper, and her cheeks would burn, and her heart be seared by it, at least she would not be put to public shame.

When the counsel for the prosecution stood up, Jack as well knew what was coming as if he had heard it already rehearsed, and indeed the case was so clear, the facts were so few and pitiless, that they needed little embroidery, and had none.

"It was the old story" (said the counsel) "of a man trusting his wife and friend, and betrayed by both. This poor gentleman—poor in the sense of his wrongs, and in that he had not moral courage to stand up against the discovery he made—had undoubtedly surprised his wife and her lover to-

gether, and on becoming aware of his dishonor had, in a moment of passion and madness, slain the betrayer, slain him, too, in a manner at once cowardly and indefensible, for Mr. Ross was unarmed. The wife, presumably, witnessed the crime, and that she held herself immediately responsible for it is evidenced by the fact that she afterward persistently accused herself of it, and begged to be committed for trial and punished instead of her husband.

"Yet what astounding nerve she displayed during that night! After such a scene as may be imagined, but can hardly be described, she calmly slept—slept with the body of her murdered lover at her very feet, and to all appearance so dreamlessly, that only the entry of her maid next morning awoke her! The prisoner, too, showed a most inhuman callousness, for he, too, went to bed after the murder—presumably slept. It had been urged that Mrs. St. George slumbered throughout the whole tragedy, but was it credible that her husband could slay, and leave a body there, for her eyes to fall upon when she wakened? Such barbarity was impossible.

"But with the point of Mrs. St. George's ignorance or knowledge of the events of that night, the jury had nothing to do, but simply to consider whether the evidence pointed to the prisoner as the person who slew Mr. Ross. His own confession,

his possession of the pistol, and certain independent testimony that would be brought forward, must be considered to bring the guilt home to him as thoroughly as if the evidence was conclusively positive, instead of circumstantial.

"It would probably be suggested by the defence that a surprised burglar had fired the shot, but as Mrs. St. George's jewels were safe, and as diligent inquiry had failed to detect any trace of the house being entered on that night from without, that theory fell to the ground, and by no possible combination of circumstances could the prisoner have stood in his present position had he not been guilty.

"This theory, too, was negatived by the wife; her self-accusal making it obvious that she suspected no one but her husband; obvious too, that she well knew the motive that inspired the murder, and which no other person could possibly have.

"It was true that the prisoner had received the most terrible provocation a man could have. In his own house, betrayed alike by wife and friend, he had come unexpectedly on what must madden most men, and he had been seized by the terrible temptation to kill, and he had yielded to the temptation savagely, and to the forgetting of his manliness—since Mr. Ross was unarmed."

Jack bowed his head as if in shame.

"Had there been a fight between the two, or the prisoner had not used a deadly weapon, the case might have been one of manslaughter only.

"But so long as human life was invested with sacredness, the laws that guarded it must be respected. That a cowardly crime had in this instance been committed was clear, and if they were satisfied that the prisoner was guilty of it, it would be their duty to say so."

The peroration was plain to a fault, and the creatures who go to hear a *cause célèbre* as they go to a play expressly arranged for their edification, had a distinct sense of ill-usage as the counsel for the prosecution sat down.

Why had not that jade, Elizabeth, been set higher in the pillory of public scorn, and for a longer space? They would have liked to have her there, to gloat over her misery, to scan her face, to count each heart-throb of agony, as she gazed upon the wreck and desolation she had brought upon this poor gentleman who had so sincerely loved her.

But with the first witness called for the prosecution—Rose Dupont—a curious hush fell on the assemblage, for one glance at the prisoner had shown how powerfully her presence there affected him.

Rose—as a witness against him! The devoted

servant—the woman who would apparently have gone through fire and water for her mistress—what had she come hither to say? To speak against Elizabeth—to corroborate his wife's mad story? Perhaps Rose had been in her confidence all through, and now the woman had come here to betray her.

He hardly breathed as he looked at the slight, graceful, dark-eyed woman, who had that genius for dress which belongs to the born Parisian, and which will almost cover up the ravages of time or suffering and misspent days. She fixed all eyes for one breathless moment; then the women softly said "Ah!" and some of the men muttered, "What a little devil!"

Having been sworn, her examination commenced.

"You have been maid to Mrs. St. George some years?"

"Yes." (She spoke English well, but with a French accent.)

"You remember the night of May the 10th?"

"Perfectly."

"Your mistress slept downstairs in the back drawing-room on that night?"

"She did."

"Was this an unusual occurrence?"

"No. The ceiling of her bedroom was low, and she liked plenty of air. Mr. St. George did not——"

She stopped abruptly, a curious shade passing over her face.

"Did not——?"

She made no reply.

"Did Mrs. St. George tell you beforehand when she meant to sleep downstairs?"

"Certainly. I prepared the room for her."

"At what time on that especial day did she tell you to prepare it?"

"After dinner."

"The prisoner was present?"

"He was."

"You disrobed her as usual, and saw her into bed?"

"I left my mistress in her dressing-gown in the drawing-room, ready for bed."

"You afterward retired to rest yourself?"

"I did."

"What happened within your hearing afterward?"

"I heard the two other servants come upstairs."

"At what time?"

"About eleven."

"You then fell asleep?"

"No. I was suffering from toothache."

"Your door was open or shut?"

"Partly open."

"And you heard——?"

Jack leaned forward, scarcely breathing as he waited for an answer.

"I heard Mr. Ross come up to his rooms."

"At what time?"

"Between twelve and one."

Jack smiled. Rose caught the smile, and threw back her head defiantly.

"What happened next?"

"I heard him—some time after—go softly downstairs."

Jack's eyes flashed. A burning desire to strangle the life out of this mocking she-devil devoured him. Who would have thought she had power to corrupt Elizabeth? Yet this thing he believed she had done.

"You had placed a letter from Mrs. St. George on his table?"

"Yes."

"You say you heard Mr. Ross go down. Did you hear any loud talking, or a shot fired?"

"No. My room faces on the street. The second drawing-rooms are built out at the back, and I could not possibly have heard what was going on."

"Mr. Ross did not return?"

"No."

"You were uneasy?"

"Yes."

"Yet you did not attempt to find out what was going on?"

"No—I was afraid."

"You feared something?"

"Yes."

"What happened next?"

"At two o'clock—for I heard the hour strike—Mr. St. George came upstairs."

Jack smiled again, and an irascible juryman wondered what the young man could find to laugh at in this.

"And you?"

"At last I fell asleep."

"And in the morning?"

"I got up at seven, and went downstairs."

"Mr. Ross's door was open?"

"Yes. I concluded he had gone out again after coming in overnight."

"What next?"

"I prepared and took up my mistress's tea."

"Describe what you found."

"I pushed open the folding-doors, and went in. The room was rather dark, and only when I was quite close to it, I saw—a body."

Rose shivered.

"You were surprised?"

"*Mon Dieu,*" burst out the girl with perfect naturalness, "I could have died with terror. Mr. Ross was there," she drew back, and looked down as at some frightful sight, "at my feet—*dead!*"

"And Mrs. St. George?"

"Her eyes were open, she was looking at me."

"What state was she in?"

"Quite composed."

"You approached her?"

"Approach the body? *Non, non,* I ran away! I called, I shrieked, and they all came running, Mr. St. George and the rest."

"How soon did Mr. St. George come?"

"At once—on the spot. He arrived first of all."

"Fully dressed?"

Rose shook her head. She did not remember.

"You have carried notes from Mrs. St. George to Mr. Ross?"

"Often."

"And replies from him to her?"

"Often."

"They met occasionally in Mr. St. George's absence?"

"They did."

"Did he know of these visits?"

"That I cannot say."

"Mr. and Mrs. St. George were on good terms?"

"Perfectly."

"Have you ever witnessed any misconduct between Mr. Ross and Mrs. St. George?"

Rose paused—a pause more damning than any speech.

"I seldom saw them in each other's company," she said at last, and refused to say more. Had she made the blackest accusations possible she could not have produced a more unfavorable impression of Elizabeth's conduct than her silence conveyed.

"H'm," thought Mr. Lemaire, "likes her mistress and hates her master, knows a great deal that she won't tell, and tells a great deal that she don't know."

"You are aware that the letter written to Mr. Ross by Mrs. St. George, and received by him on his return home that night, was never found?"

"So I have heard."

"You cannot account for its disappearance?"

"No."

"Did you see her take the letter on her way upstairs after, on the morning the murder was discovered?"

"No."

"Was she left alone a moment after she came upstairs?"

"Yes."

Obstinate silence rewarded further questions on this point.

"Mrs. St. George had every confidence in you?"

"I believe so."

"She *did* confide in you?"

"I never said so."

The questions languished after this, and she was left practically mistress of the occasion. To shake her out of her calm seemed impossible, yet this Mr. Lemaire had resolved to do, when he rose in his place to cross-examine her.

CHAPTER XI.

"But if once the message greet him,
That his true love doth stay,
If death should come and meet him,
Love will find out the way."

"YOU say you could not sleep that night," he said, sharply, "were you expecting something to happen?"

"I had toothache."

"Why did you leave your door ajar?"

Rose's eyes sparkled. Through the thin veil she wore one could see her thin nostrils contracting and dilating with rage.

"That is my business."

"You had no partiality for Mr. Ross yourself?"

Rose disdained to answer.

The question was pressed.

"Mr. Ross was a gentleman," she said at last.

"You expected something to happen that night, and it did," said Mr. Lemaire, "was it precisely what you *did* expect?"

He leaned forward with a satirical smile on his face that might have maddened a less passionate woman than Rose Dupont.

"You devil!" she exclaimed, point blank.

Mr. Lemaire shrugged his shoulders, some women in the court tittered, and there was a little pause while Rose recovered from her violence, and forced herself to mutter an apology.

"Upon my soul I shouldn't wonder if she did it herself," thought Mr. Lemaire.

"To resume," he said smoothly—"you are quite sure that Mr. Ross did not get any farther than the drawing-room on the night when—a-hem!—your toothache enabled you to have the full benefit of your ears?"

"I could not say." (Rose's breast still rose and fell stormily.) "At that distance I could not hear how far he descended, but I should probably have heard the street-door shut had he gone out. He usually made a good deal of noise."

"Your impression is that he went no farther than the drawing-room?"

"That is my impression."

"Did not curiosity impel you to go downstairs and see what was taking place?"

"That would not have been a part of my duty."

"Was it a part of your duty to drug the draught your mistress took the last thing that night?"

The Frenchwoman turned livid as a corpse, her black eyes glowing like fire.

"I?" she faltered—off her guard at last—"I—" she tried to speak, could not, then taking her corsage with both hands, said firmly, "I mixed no draught for my mistress. I put the things ready as usual on a little table, and left them there."

Jack was listening with the most intense eagerness, his hand clutching the rail before him.

Had Elizabeth been drugged that night? Had he been all along under the influence of a horrible mistake? And was she indeed inhumanly wronged, not only in appearance but by his thoughts?

"Was Mrs. St. George addicted to chloral?"

Mr. Lemaire put the question in his gentlest, therefore most dangerous manner.

Rose was silent.

It was on Jack's lips to shout out "No! *No!*" but he restrained himself.

"You knew the sapphires were in the pocket of her dressing-gown?"

"No," said Rose, with stubborn lips, "Mrs. St. George hid them in all sorts of places, but never told me where. I have known other ladies do the same with their jewels, because they objected to having a safe put up."

A juryman here remarked that he thought such carelessness criminal, and a direct encouragement to burglaries.

"You never spoke to your lover — the young Frenchman with whom you walked out—of the sapphires?" said Mr. Lemaire, amiably.

Rose looked at him calmly. She had herself well in hand now, and was prepared for the worst.

"What we talked about was no business of yours," she said, coolly.

"But it may have been that of your mistress," he said, "and your master," he added, looking at Jack, upon whose face a new light had broken, turning it to joy.

Life had changed its mien for him during the space of the last minute, and from the abysses of despair he passed at a bound to the buoyancy of hope, and covering his face with his hands, he trembled like a reed.

Guilt was stamped on Rose's face, stamped there in letters that all her fierce control of feature could not hide; but she bóre herself erect, and had evidently plenty of fight left in her yet.

"You spend a great deal of time at the cobbler's, the back of whose house overlooks No. 13, do you not?" said Mr. Lemaire.

"I go there occasionally to get Master Daffy's shoes mended, and buy him new ones," said Rose, hardily.

"You are aware that there is a skylight in the cobbler's house, from which a person might easily

drop on to the leads that are level with the room in which Mrs. St. George slept that night?"

"So I heard afterward. To me the roof looked all slates, like your English roofs—and I saw no window."

"You are an old acquaintance of the young Frenchman who has assisted the cobbler in his work only so far back as a few months, and——"

"*Mon Dieu! non!*" said Rose, raising expressive brows, "this young man is common—very common—and he seems not to be French, he speaks English always."

"Almost as well as yourself?" said Mr. Lemaire, dryly. "How does he call himself?"

Rose's eyes narrowed.

"How should I know?" she said.

The solicitor's inquiries had not been able to establish the identity between the Frenchman with whom she had kept company and the man who was the cobbler's assistant, but Mr. Lemaire meant to assume it all the same.

"You have known Janin Pierrot many years?" he said.

The shot told, and for a moment she looked as if she were about to fall.

"I know no Janin Pierrot," she said, with shaking lips.

"I fear you have a treacherous memory," said Mr. Lemaire, smiling, as with a gesture he released her and resumed his seat.

Worsted, not broken, savage as a wild-cat that knows itself trapped, and expects worse things, Rose left the witness-box, and for a while disappeared.

Astonishment at the new turn things had taken was now growing apace, but Mr. Skewton's appearance on the scene heralded a *volte-face* that speedily caused the readjustment of a good many newly acquired ideas, and blew the theory expounded by Mr. Lemaire into thin air.

Mr. Skewton described how he had proceeded straight to the room where Mr. Ross had been shot, the body having already been removed to his own chamber.

He deposed to the prisoner's excessive agitation, to the pistol which he was concealing in his breast-pocket, and which he (Mr. Skewton) took from him; to his voluntary confession of the murder, how it happened, and in fact all save the motive that evidently prompted it.

He further related how, in Mr. Ross's room, partly disordered, as if in the act of undressing he had suddenly gone downstairs, he had found an envelope on the toilette-table addressed to that gentleman; how

he had taken it down to the prisoner, who recognized it as his wife's handwriting; of what a terrible effect was produced upon him by the sight of it, and of how valuable a link in the chain of evidence he considered that scrap of writing supplied.

Being brought to book for this last remark, Mr. Skewton imperturbably went on to relate how he went up to Mrs. St. George's room, where he found her locked in with her maid; how presently she opened the door to him, and presently accused herself of having killed Mr. Ross; how, by an incautious gesture, he had indicated the pistol in his pocket; how she had snatched it from him, and declared that with it she had committed the crime; how he had treated her words as idle raving, how Mr. St. George had come up and forbidden her to so perjure herself; and how she had begged him (her husband) to speak to her before he went down; and how her husband had refused.

Jack's face was white and drawn as he listened. Had she not kneeled to him, his good, his pure, little Elizabeth, and had he not spurned her as though she were the vilest of God's creatures? Could she forgive him? Was her silence indeed the silence of outraged love that had turned to hate?

Mr. Skewton went on to say that the most diligent inquiry had failed to discover any trace of

any person or burglar entering the house on that night.

True, there was the skylight, but the cobbler who lived in the house was above suspicion, or rather, physically incapacitated from attempting burglary, and he was the only person who had slept in the place that night.

His assistant slept out, and it had been positively proved that he *did* sleep at his lodging that night, as he (Mr. Skewton) had made it his business to find out. He had gone straight there after work, gone to bed early, had breakfasted there next morning, and only got the news of the murder when he returned to work. His name was Janin Pierrot.

With regard to the tumbler, which undoubtedly contained a sediment of chloral, he had removed it without being perfectly sure of what it had contained, but it smelt odd, and at that time he had his own theory about the murder.

Mr. Skewton's evidence produced a profound impression. However much he had erred in his zeal and officiously assisted Jack along his road to the gallows, thereby earning for himself the "hammering" of the Judge, he had spoken to facts, and proved them too; while as yet Mr. Lemaire had nothing substantial with which to support his the-

ory. Nevertheless, he was in his best form when he jumped up, and said :

"You suspected the French maid from the beginning ?"

"I thought she had a hand in the destruction of the missing letter."

"You think so still ?"

"No."

"What *do* you think ?"

"That Mrs. St. George obtained possession of it, and destroyed it herself."

"And your impression *was* that the maid had doctored the draught ?"

"At first—yes."

"In order to put her mistress into a sound sleep while the sapphires were stolen ?"

"Yes."

"You did not believe Mr. St. George when he accused himself of the murder ?"

"I might not have done, without the confirmatory evidence of the pistol."

"You say you saw he was hiding it in his breast. May he not have picked it up from where it had been flung by some other person ?"

"It is possible. But his demeanor was that of a guilty person."

"Which you took care to intensify. Does it not

strike you that you went considerably beyond your duty in trying to get him to incriminate himself?"

Mr. Skewton was silent.

"Even after this convincing evidence of the prisoner's guilt, you held to your theory that a burglar had something to do with the business?"

"Yes. But after working continuously at the case I was reluctantly obliged to dismiss the idea, there was absolutely no evidence to support it."

"You did not even ascertain that the cobbler's assistant was Rose Dupont's lover?"

"No."

"Then I congratulate Scotland Yard on you," said Mr. Lemaire, contemptuously, as he sat down.

But jurymen are usually plain men, who do not cultivate their imaginations, and who are apt to sift even facts to their extremest winnowing-point, so that Mr. Lemaire's cross-examination appeared to them in the light of fireworks, that did no harm, if but little good.

Job Trubshoes, the cobbler, was next called, not so much as a witness against the prisoner, as to offer rebutting testimony to the possibility of any person having got from his house into No. 13 that night.

Pushed into the witness-box against his will, and presenting as crabbed an appearance as a human being well could, he answered the questions put to

him slowly and grudgingly at first, but presently got angry, and gave out his snarls quicker.

What he had to say had been largely discounted by Mr. Skewton, but he was made to relate in detail what hours his apprentice kept, and many other details, that made that young man appear an industrious and harmless creature who would not hurt a fly, and who, by no manner of means could have obtained entrance to the cobbler's house, unknown by the cobbler, that night.

But just as the cross old man was congratulating himself on his ordeal being over, Mr. Lemaire rose, and pounced upon him, like a spider on a fly.

"How long has Janin Pierrot been with you?"

"I don't rightly remember. It might be a month —or two—or six."

"Take care, sir. How many months has he been with you?"

"Three."

"You wanted an assistant, and he came to you to offer himself?"

"Ay, he did."

"How came he to know you wanted an assistant?"

"How do I know? P'r'aps you told him."

"And you took him without recommendations?"

"P'r'aps I did, and p'r'aps I didn't."

"You took him without recommendations?"

"Since you're so pressing, I did."

"He was a good workman?"

"Good enough for me."

"Did a Frenchwoman call to see him?"

"I don't encourage no petticoats about the place. I'm a bacheldore, I am, thank the Lord."

"She did call?"

"One called yesterday."

"Was that her first visit?"

"Women be such figgers nowadays, and dress so much alike—how can I tell?"

Mr. Lemaire pressed the point—to his sorrow.

"I tell 'ee," said Job, getting angry, "I never saw the woman—nor did Pierrot for the matter of that—till about a fortnight ago, when she came in in a hurry to get a shoe eased for a little child she had with her. And she never said a word to he, nor he to she."

Mr. Lemaire swallowed his chagrin bravely.

"You knew she was maid to Mrs. St. George?"

"No."

"You knew her name?"

"No. Neighbors told me afterward she came from No. 13, but her money was as good as anyone else's so I wasn't going to turn it away."

"At what time did Pierrot leave off work?"

"Six o'clock."

"He left at that time the night of the murder?"

"He did."

"You remained in the house all the evening?"

"Yes."

"You never once left the house?"

Job Trubshoes hesitated, scowling and mumbling his grizzled jaws.

"P'r'aps I did. For a matter of five minutes. To buy my supper beer."

"You left your door unlocked?"

"Yes."

"Any one might have got in during your absence?"

"Who wanted to get in?" snarled the old man. "I'd got nothing to steal."

"It was dark when you went out?"

"Cat's twilight."

"Did you visit the attic that night?"

"No; it's a lumber-room. What should I want there at night?"

Mr. Lemaire nodded his head several times.

"What time did Janin come next morning?"

"Eight o'clock."

"Did he look as usual?"

"A man don't change his face with his coat. I took no particular notice on him."

"Some inquiries were made at your house that day?"

"Yes, a passel of fools who turned the place upside down, and me and Janin inside out. But they didn't get much change out of either on us."

"He has come regularly to work ever since?"

"Never missed a day."

"Seems cheerful?"

"Shoemaking don't want cheerfulness, it wants skill. Janin stuck to his work, and didn't trouble about women, and murders, and such-like stuff. Lor, sir!" added the old wretch with a grin, "you've found a mare's nest, and much good may it do 'ee!"

So departed Job Trubshoes; but Mr. Lemaire had made his point, viz.: that Janin could easily have returned to the house unknown to Job, have hidden himself in the disused attic and made his way comfortably enough into No. 13. Could—might have—but did he?

The *alibi* was very clear.

And then the court adjourned for luncheon.

CHAPTER XII.

"There's nane may lean on a rotten staff
But him that risks to get a fa'."

MR. LEMAIRE was in no worse plight than many a clever advocate had been before him, viz.: having to make bricks without straw, and good, hard convincing bricks too, that would stand any amount of scanning and throwing about.

Yet, having decided to call no witnesses, as he rose after luncheon to reply, he bore so confident a bearing, and had so easy an air of assurance, that Rose, sitting in a remote corner of the court, trembled with fear as she looked at him.

His very first words gave her good cause for terror, for he roundly stated, in a very fine and impressive manner, that the prisoner in the dock had no business there at all; for, that if the detectives had not blundered and misled justice, another man, and that the really guilty one, would be standing there in his place.

"The name of that man"—and here Mr. Lemaire paused, and his scathing eyes found out the French-

woman where she sat—"was Janin Pierrot, Rose Dupont's lover, and Rose Dupont's confederate, the man whom she had incited to steal her mistress's jewels, whom she had assisted to get into the house, whom she had helped to depart, and who had shot Mr. Ross when discovered on the premises by that gentleman when he returned to the house, *after Mr. St. George had gone up to bed.*"

At this daring indictment, unexpected, startling, a bolt out of the blue, all eyes were turned on Jack, then on Rose, who, cowering as under a crushing physical blow, had crouched down with bowed head in her place, every line of her figure a corroboration of his words.

"That woman," said Mr. Lemaire, pointing a terrible finger at her, "laid her plans well. She had by her the chloral ready to mix with her mistress's night-draught, and had long ago arranged the signal by which she was to let her lover know when Mrs. St. George was sleeping downstairs, alone and unprotected, with the sapphires close at hand; and, in short, everything fell out precisely as she had hoped and intended—with one exception—the unexpected contingency of Mr. Ross's return. Mrs. St. George duly drank her draught, and went to bed and to sleep; a notoriously bad sleeper she slept right away from eleven o'clock that night until eight

o'clock next morning! Mr. St. George in due course went upstairs and also retired to rest, not, as that woman with the toothache had sworn, after Mr. Ross came in, but before.

"The coast was now clear, all was prepared for the thief, Janin Pierrot, and at the given time he stole safely and secretly into the house. Into the house, yes, but meanwhile, someone who had not been taken into the woman's reckoning came in with his latch-key, and, in the act of undressing, hearing movements below for which he could not account (probably the noise made by the man's getting through the window), descended quickly, and found himself face to face with an intruder, who, having come for plunder, was betrayed by personal jeopardy and fear of consequences into murder. Mr. Ross always carried firearms; in this instance he carried a pistol belonging to Mr. St. George, and it was natural enough that he should present the weapon he had with him at the man he found there under such desperate circumstances at such an hour of the night.

"That man," went on Mr. Lemaire, still with his eyes fixed on Rose's bowed figure, "Janin Pierrot, Rose Dupont's lover, alias the cobbler's assistant, snatched the pistol from Mr. Ross's hand, shot him dead with it, laid him at the very feet of the drugged

and innocent woman, who had been betrayed by the maid she had benefited and trusted, and too terrified to pause and secure the booty for which he had come, made his escape.

"If the woman upstairs stole down in the night and saw the hideous work her greed had wrought, she has proved herself of sufficient resource and resolution to go up again, and remain quietly there till the morning, when the discovery of the night's events would come about naturally and no suspicion attach to herself.

"So, indeed, things fell out, and we may be sure that when her poor mistress woke out of that drugged sleep, to find a murdered man only a yard or two away, the maid shrieked louder than the mistress, and manifested ten times as much surprise and terror.

"And here," Mr. Lemaire turned and looked at Jack, "came in (apart from that poor young man's death) the most tragic, the most unfortunate feature of the whole case, and the one that so completely played into Rose Dupont's hands as left her mistress of the game. In the first shock of the discovery husband and wife mutually suspected each other of the crime, the husband thinking the wife had killed his friend in defence of her honor, the wife believing that Mr. Ross had stolen into her room while she was asleep, been discovered there by her husband,

and that in a fit of fury the latter had killed his friend, believing in her guilt, and left the dead man there to tell his own tale."

Mr. Lemaire removed his eyes from Rose, to glance at Jack, and thrilled with satisfaction at the success of his bold guess, while the eyes of all present, following his, found in Jack's face a living corroboration of his counsel's words.

Have you ever stood still to watch the mists chased from the hill-side by the morning sun ?

Even so, with its swift on-coming, on-rolling light, came the swift illumination of Jack's mind, and he *saw*, whereas before he had been blind.

Was it indeed he who had unhesitatingly accepted Elizabeth's guilt, who afterward, when he had assoiled her of unfaithfulness, had even been thrilled by an exultant thought through all his anguish that she had loved *him* enough to become a criminal in the defence of her honor ?

O ! Heavens ! why had he not taken her in his arms and heard her story ? Why had he, who best knew her goodness, lapsed to such a fatal conclusion, and clung grimly to it like one whom the gods wishing to destroy had deprived of wisdom ?

Suddenly he threw out his hungry hands as if he would seize her ; and those who looked at him thought he had been long mad, but was now sane.

And many thought of Elizabeth rehabilitated, if all Mr. Lemaire said were true.

Were they pleased, amazed? Scarcely. The usual experience is, that when people have made up their minds that such and such a thing *is*, they mostly feel disappointed and ill-used to find that the flagitious thing is *not*, and that their pity or blame, usually the latter, has been wasted.

"Gentlemen," went on Mr. Lemaire impressively, "there could surely be no more piteous and moving situation on earth than that of these two persons, nobly wrong, and superhumanly foolish, who instead of opening their hearts to each other, and immediately discovering their guiltlessness, fell into the error of believing each other guilty, and in their great love strove each to suffer for the wrong that he believed his fellow to have committed! Does no such self-sacrifice shine out with an almost Divine light beside the foul treachery of yonder woman, who was deliberately betraying the persons whose bread she ate?

"Could a more cruel fate be imagined than had overtaken this poor lady, who, blameless and secure in her husband's love, and the shelter of her own home, afflicted, too, with a sad misfortune that left her especially at the mercy of rogues, and which in this instance, had actually conspired against her to make her appear infamous, found herself suddenly

confronted with a tragedy that might shatter the strongest nerves, and branded with a character that made her infamous among women? Her husband snatched from her, willing to suffer for her, yet refusing to so much as touch her hand, her home destroyed, her character ruined—and by whom? Yonder woman, who cared for nothing so long as her loutish lover got free, who, aiming first at robbery, was not satisfied with having brought about *one* murder, but by perjured evidence sought to bring about another—the judicial murder of the man who stood in the dock that day!"

And in conclusion, Mr. Lemaire, who had scarcely suffered his audience to draw breath, with such hurricane force had he proceeded, with all the eloquence of which he was capable called upon the jury to acquit the prisoner, who in thought and in deed was innocent.

Then he sat down, feeling that no matter what turn events took, he had done his duty, and that his bold guess at the identity of the cobbler's assistant with Rose Dupont's lover, was a stroke of genius only equalled by his improvisation of what really took place on the night of Barry Ross's death, and which Rose's attitude had affirmed to be correct.

Yet no one knew better than he how brief the effect of his *tour de force* would be.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I dreamed a dreary dream last nicht
God keep us a' free frae sorrow!
I dream'd I pu'd the birk sae green,
Wi' my true love on Yarrow."

THE judge was summing up, and Mr. Lemaire was not happy.

His lordship commenced by saying that "a murder is seldom or never committed without a motive, and if the prisoner were guilty, the whole evidence in this case, with one or two trifling exceptions to be dealt with later, pointed to jealousy as the immediate cause.

"In the highly ingenious and brilliant defence set up by the learned counsel, it had been insisted on that each of these two persons believed the other guilty; but there was not one atom of proof to support this theory, in fact there was no tittle of positive evidence to support anything he had put forward, with the exception of the drugged glass of ginger and water, and who was to prove that Mrs. St. George did not place the chloral in it herself? Unhappily women, and men too, were only too prone

to purchase rest at the cost of subsequent weakness and depression, and Mrs. St. George had evidently suffered from sleeplessness in no unusual degree. That she did sleep through the occurrences of that night might be taken for granted, and that she had no farther hand in the catastrophe than possibly the moral responsibility of bringing it about, was equally certain.

"Her deafness was a most extraordinary feature in the case, and a very piteous thing in a most piteous story. Here were the facts:

"Mr. St. George had taken as tenant under his own roof a young and attractive man, who by degrees had apparently become on greater terms of intimacy with Mrs. St. George than the husband was aware, as, quite independently of the possibly tainted evidence of the maid, the detective had described how he found an envelope in Mr. Ross's bedroom, evidently torn open during the night, that Mr. St. George recognized as his wife's handwriting, and the sight of which most powerfully affected him. The letter it had enclosed was gone, and presumably had been abstracted by Mrs. St. George or her maid, when the two women went upstairs next morning. Now what construction could reasonably be placed on a letter written by a wife secretly, and by her maid secretly conveyed to another man's rooms, the

immediate effect of which was to make him descend to the apartment in which she was sleeping? If there were no harm in the letter, why had it not been left in the envelope on his table? A mere ordinary note would have told in favor of there being no bad blood between the two men, but the disappearance of the letter argued a desperate determination to allow no one to read its contents. Then again, the strongest witness against the prisoner was his wife—her self-accusal accused him. Humanly speaking, her conduct was that of a woman who has sinned, who has brought about a tragedy by her sin, and who wishes to pay the penalty with her life. Why was it that neither of these two persons ever thought, as rational people would have done, in the first shock and horror of the discovery, that the murder had been committed by someone from outside, by a foiled burglar, or one of the servants? Neither seems to have even glanced at such a supposition, and the inference is obvious, that one suspected and the other *knew* by whose hand Mr. Ross had met his death.

"His own confession must go for something, supported by circumstance as it was. He had said that he committed the murder in a violent fit of rage and jealousy on seeing his friend enter and go straight to the inner room where his wife was. The

pistol was found in his possession, his wife believed him guilty, and but for the theory about Janin Pierrot, the formality of trial need scarcely have been gone through.

"If, indeed, as had been affirmed, Janin Pierrot obtained an entrance to the house with the intention of stealing Mrs. St. George's sapphires, how came he to depart without them, though within actual reach of his hand?

"Burglars do not stumble about their work blindfold, they have a pretty accurate knowledge of the exact whereabouts of things before they peril their lives to steal them, and was it for a moment conceivable that a man who had nerve enough to commit murder, rather than be balked in his design, would not find sufficient courage to carry out his intention when only a drugged woman and a dead man were by to hinder him?

"Had the sapphires been discovered missing, then indeed suspicion might have fallen on some person without the house, but nothing was touched or disturbed, and diligent inquiry had failed to furnish one iota of proof against the man whom counsel had so boldly denounced.

"He had left the cobbler's house at a certain hour, had eaten his evening meal at his lodgings in Marylebone Road, had gone to bed at his usual

time, having placed his boots outside his door, had risen as usual next morning at seven, and gone to his work, continuing to do so with perfect regularity from that day to this.

"If the man were guilty, he would probably have run away long ago, unable to bear the strain upon him; that he had not done so was enormously in his favor.

"Why had not the learned counsel for the defence brought him forward as a witness? The man had been watched and tracked everywhere, for weeks, yet evidently without any result being obtained whatever.

"One was forced to conclude that the learned counsel's line of defence had been built mainly on his observation of the woman—Rose Dupont's—attitude under cross-examination, and that his imagination growing by what it fed on, he had been swept away by the violence of a suddenly conceived and prejudiced opinion.

"That the woman had come out badly could not be denied; but it should be remembered that she was a foreigner, that she found herself in a difficult position even to a person who understood our laws and ways, that she had been roughly handled, and that women show fear in different ways, and that the livery of guilt and innocence is, in some instances, perilously alike.

"It was also clear that she was deep in her mistress's confidence, and it might be that her desire to suppress facts calculated to harm Mrs. St. George tended still further to embarrass her, for it was possible that she might have a sincere affection for that unfortunate lady, though compelled on oath to speak against her.

"Then the identity of the man with whom it was assumed she kept company was by no means established with that of Janin Pierrot, though if this could be done, no doubt his presence at the cobbler's would, in itself, be a suspicious circumstance.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, in conclusion, "you have the case. If you are not *sure* that you have the right man, it becomes your duty to bring in a verdict accordingly; if, on the other hand, you find that, in a moment of madness, the accused took his friend's life, you will find him guilty, and in your hands, confident that you will exercise your utmost judgment and discretion, I now leave the issues of the trial."

The sun was shining brightly into the court, a warm summer wind seemed to blow in through the open doors, as the judge abruptly left his seat, and the jury, with anxious hearts and faces, retired.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I wad gie a' my gowd, my bairn,
Sae wad I a' my fee,
For ae blast o' the wastling wind
To blaw the reek frae thee!"

DAFFY, for the first time in all his little young life, had found his mother's door locked against him, and after waiting outside it for a long while, had gone down with bursting heart into the kitchen, and sought the company of the old lady who, for the present, ruled those shades, and dwelled in them by night and day. There had been a difficulty in replacing the servants, who had precipitately fled after the occurrence in May, but Mrs. Chick, a lone widow who usually travelled with a bundle, had shown herself loftily indifferent to fears of *revenants* and spirits, indeed, she had a very strong partiality for the latter, mixed with sugar and hot water, but as she seldom indulged the taste till evening, no one but Rose was any the wiser, and certainly she herself seemed never the worse.

This lady was preparing the little fellow's luncheon when he came in for comfort, for she was kind

to him, and in the depths of his heart he preferred her, black and grimy as she was, to Rose.

She brought him the kitten to play with, dried his eyes on her apron, and made him extravagant promises in the way of jam puffs and sweeties, as she went on mincing the chicken, and turning out the custard-pudding that were to form his dinner.

Daffy gradually ceased to sob, and sat with the kitten in his arms, looking at the strange medley of things that an untidy cook gets about her in a kitchen, at the shapeless bonnet, the dismal shawl, the suspicious little bottles, and that admixture of things eatable, and the reverse, that, if seen, would take away upstair appetites very speedily.

He felt almost happy as he sat there, it was all so strange and new, for Rose never allowed him to come in here, but sat him down to his toys in the shabby room on the other side of the passage, when mother, poor mother, was too tired to play with him.

"Now here's as nice a lunch as a little gentleman could wish to eat," said Mrs. Chick at last, and tying a clean apron over her in such a way as to hide a multitude of sins, she washed her face, smoothed her hair before a bit of broken glass, and announced her intention of going upstairs to lay the cloth.

"Mother won't open the door," said Daffy, sadly, as she went out, and then his eyes filled up again,

and he sighed—he had got quite into the habit of sighing now.

Mrs. Chick knocked in vain at the dining-room door, which was locked, and still as death within.

For once in Elizabeth's life Nature refused to answer to whip and spur, and she had fallen prone before the great agony which swept in relentless flood above her, leaving her no power to rise or even cry out, but only to passively endure it, knowing that beyond lay only the worse apathy of despair.

Rose had gone to the court, and till the woman returned with tidings of either good or evil, life itself seemed arrested, and everything void to Elizabeth. Even Daffy had faded out of a consciousness that had room for nothing but Jack—Jack.

More than one person had wished to come and stay with her that day, more than one of those friends whom she thanked gently enough, but who had never stormed the citadel of her confidence, never known her inmost heart, for she was essentially of that order of women who makes of her husband her chief and only friend, and in a lesser degree her children, so that she keeps the hearth warm while the world finds her cold.

Mrs. Chick felt herself growing anxious as she stood there, dead silence within and without the shut door. Nothing, as she used to say, was more

catching than coroner's inquests in a house, and knowing that no message had come to say the trial was proceeding favorably, Mrs. St. George had perhaps resigned herself to the worst.

So Mrs. Chick stood in doubt and anxiety for some minutes, then thinking of Daffy, went downstairs.

"Your ma don't want her dinner just directly, Master Daffy," she said, briskly, "so what do you say to having it down here at this end of the table, all nice and cheerful, with the kitten for company?"

Daffy expressed himself delighted with the idea, and after begging Mrs. Chick to keep some of the chicken very hot for mother, and afterward make her an "omblebit," or something she would like, he fed himself and the kitten alternately, almost forgetting his woes in the novelty of the situation.

When he had eaten his custard-pudding, and drank some milk and water, he got down out of the chair that had been manufactured into a high one by sundry bundles and shawls of Mrs. Chick's, and when she went upstairs again, laying many injunctions on him not to go near the fire, he wandered out, the kitten still in his arms, to the door that opened on the area, rejoicing in the soft air that blew freshly on his face.

Many interesting and unusual sights beckoned him on, and soon he came to the foot of the area

steps, and with a fine feeling of independence and adventure, began to climb them.

At the top the gate was open, and he stood there with the wind blowing his golden curls about, and making a balloon of his white pinafore (a little the worse for his adventures in the kitchen), and *wishing* that he had somebody to play with.

Few people were passing, and no one took any particular heed of him, but soon he felt more lonely still, for the ungrateful kitten suddenly sprang out of his arms, and down the steps and out of sight.

He bent over to look after her, and the steps frightened him, they looked so steep and dirty; he wished Mrs. Chick would come up to fetch him down—or Janin—the thought of the man put an idea into his head, and fast as he could patter, he ran down the bit of street, and round the corner.

He laughed to himself as he went, he thought his idea so very clever, and never stopped laughing till he had got to the cobbler's door, through which he saw Janin sitting with his back to him hard at work.

"Janny," he screamed at the top of his voice, and rushing in, threw his arms round the man's neck, "me has runneded away, and come to play a little bit with you!"

The man laid down his tools, turning a drawn and haggard face upon the child's lovely, eager one.

"Master Daffy," he said, stumblingly, "you might have been run over—how could they let you come out alone?"

"Rose is in the city," said Daffy, promptly, "Mrs. Chick's upstairs, and mother—mother's sick," he added, hanging down his head so that his curls fell over and hid his face.

Janin lifted the child with trembling hands, and set him on his knee. He saw that Daffy's heart was aching, and felt like lead in his little bosom, and it is a mistake to think that a child's heart cannot break, it can, and does—sometimes.

Janin sat perfectly still, something picking and working at his own heart, as if that were breaking too.

"Don't cry," he said, huskily, and then Daffy looked up, and the blue and the brown eyes met.

"It's very miserbul, Janny," said Daffy, sorrowfully, "Daddy's goneded away, O' this ever and ever so long, and mother says p'r'aps he'll go away further—she don't quite know *how* far—and mother, she never laughs and plays now; and Mrs. Chick she said to Rose she 'spected," Daffy's lips quivered convulsively, "they'd take mother away in the black box soon!"

"Mrs. Chick's a fool," said Janin, savagely.

"Mother must be welly bad," said Daffy, shaking his head; "she ackshally forgot to feed the Pink

un—only fink of that! You see, I was so *very* busy, I forgoted him too. Dear little feller!"

But there was not the usual lively pride and joy in his voice, when speaking of his pet.

"Mother *never* locked the door upon me before," said Daffy, looking up earnestly at Janin, "not never. I calleded to her through the keyhole, and said I was welly lonely, and mother always hears *me* —does you think mother's *dead*, Janin?"

"Master Daffy!" cried Janin, starting up suddenly, and setting the child down.

"Then me will die too," said Daffy, with a gleam of hope on his sad little face, "mother 'ud want somebody to take care of her up *there!* You see—poor mother's a little deaf—and she might lose her way, if she hadn't got *me!*"

Janin shivered as he looked down on the drooped golden head, and seemed to see the mould being heaped above it.

"Curse her!" he said between his set teeth, and Daffy looked up alarmed.

"Is you angedy?" he said, slipping his hand into Janin's; "don't take me 'ome yest yet! Let's 'ave a little walk in the park!" he added, with a sudden burst of inspiration.

"But you have no hat," said Janin, who felt indeed that horses would not drag him to the door of that

house where Elizabeth lay waiting for the message of Jack's life or death.

"Tie a handkercher on," said Daffy, jumping down; "never wore no 'at in the country!"

Janin got up slowly, and went to a coat that was hanging up, drawing from its pocket a very large white silk handkerchief, far too fine in texture to belong to a shoemaker's assistant.

This he tied round the child's head, and tucked the ends into the bosom of his little pinafore, after which he put on his coat and hat, and like one in a dream, suffered himself to be led out by Daffy, who trod on air.

The mews were deserted; it was only when they got into the street that led to the square, midway to the park, that peopled noticed the oddly-matched pair, and stared and wondered.

But the man evidently meant no harm to the child, who clearly rejoiced in his company, chattering nineteen to the dozen; so they reached the park in safety, and presently sat down not far from the Serpentine to rest.

The cloudless sky, the warm, brisk, sweet air, the sense of liberty, and a vague suspicion that he was very naughty affected Daffy to exhilaration; he laughed, he rolled on the dry grass, and he talked in his own delightful way to his very heart's content.

Thus an hour passed; then his spirits suddenly flagged, and he drew in close to Janin, who had been sitting with eyes that looked straight before him, and face cold and still as marble.

When that soft little figure stole under his coat, and nestled close to him, mechanically he put his arm round it, then a strong shudder ran through him from head to foot, and he shook like a reed in the grasp of a moral and physical convulsion that terrified Daffy.

"Janny!" he cried, "Janny! Is you going to be sick too—like poor mother?"

Janin sprang up, the child in his arms, and walked swiftly across the grass in the direction of the gate opening on Park Lane. People stood aside as he came on, stood aside as from an avenging fate, or a pitiless power that is bound to fulfil itself for good or evil; and some thought that he looked like Lucifer bearing away an angel on his breast; others that a light—not of hell, but heaven—shone in the steady eyes that seemed to look on something afar off, to which his winged feet were bearing him. But when he had reached the road he stood still, and called to the first cabman that he saw.

Daffy did not understand the instructions given, but he stole out from under Janin's coat, and laughed for joy as they drove rapidly away.

CHAPTER XV.

"And when will ye come hame again,
Dear Willie tell to me?"
"When the sun and moon dance on yon green,
And that will never be."

THE jury were long absent, and those who waited in court had become weary, and ceased to talk.

Weariest of all was the prisoner, who had not left the dock, in which during the past few hours he had surely passed through the utmost extremes of despair and joy possible to a human being.

Calm, morally and physically capable of bearing the lot he had deliberately chosen, he had entered the dock that morning, anxious only that the formality of his trial should be over as quickly as possible, and the closing scene of all fixed for an early date.

Long ago he had acquitted Elizabeth in his mind of any taint of wrong-doing with his friend; in the silence and meditation of his days and nights she had gradually resumed the likeness in which he knew her, and for that one mad moment born of fierce faithfulness to *him*, her husband, in which she had

snatched the pistol from Barry's hand, and slain him, he had altogether forgiven her.

Such was his attitude when Mr. Lemaire's cross-examination of Rose revealed a probability that had never occurred to him, insanely preoccupied as he had been with Elizabeth's guilt.

Then, indeed, honey-sweet life had smiled to and beckoned him; and drenched with joy, and the knowledge of Elizabeth's innocence, it had seemed to him an easy thing to walk out of the dock, free, to go to her, on his knees to beg her forgiveness, and in her arms to forget this awful interlude that had marred the whole and perfect fabric of their love.

He had listened impatiently as the trial proceeded, for were they not keeping him from Elizabeth? And gradually, and with what cruel, relentless coldness, the conviction had come home to him, that his folly had tied the knot too firmly about his throat for the fingers of love to loose it, and that innocent, save of his deadly wrong to *her*, he must die, leaving her with a stigma attached to her reputation that his had been the hand to affix, and which his death would but make the more indelible.

As that death stole nearer, and life receded, all Jack's lusty strength and manhood (now that the cause for self-sacrifice was swept away) cried out in him against annihilation, against the parting from

Elizabeth, from Daffy, from the many good and pleasant years they three might have spent hand in hand together.

The sun shone brightly in on the court, the motes dancing flippantly on the dusty seats and the people, who had grown curiously quiet, all with eyes turned to that bowed head in the dock, which had not moved a hair-breadth since it first sank down.

Vaguely they felt—these people who had come to see a play—that yonder was no puppet, but a creature of human flesh and blood, with ears strained for the sound of footsteps that heralded a message of life or death.

They came at last, those steps, and immediately the court was thronged. The judge sat down in his place, and the prisoner stood up, the crest of his dark hair rising above the pale manly face that looked out calmly at the strained and breathless crowd—knowing the worst, and had Elizabeth been there, she would have been proud of her husband then.

The jury having answered to their names, in the midst of a dead silence, the question was asked :

" Have you agreed upon your verdict ? "

" Guilty—but strongly recommended to mercy."

The judge sighed. Mr. Lemaire sat with his powerful head bent down, and one arm thrown

across a bench, he neither looked up nor moved, but his attitude expressed more anger than regret.

Looking past all the faces, Jack saw only Elizabeth's as she stood at home waiting for the verdict, seemed to see her fall, to hear Daffy's sobs, and then. . . . what miracle was this, or did he indeed hear his boy's voice joyfully shouting out "*Daddy!*" at the top of his voice?

He clutched the rails before him, and Mr. Lemaire started up, and the judge, in act of adjusting the black cap, paused and leaned forward to stare also, as through the crowded court a man in hodden pushed his way, carrying in his arms a rosy, pinafored child, who clutched him round the neck with one arm, and pointed at his father with the other, laughing for joy, as they came nearer to him, so near that by stooping down, Jack could have touched them.

No one had let or hindered the pair since Janin had said a few brief words to an usher, words that out-ran him and passed from lip to lip, till they reached even the judge, who sat frowning and perplexed, the black cap forgotten, and awry on his head.

Janin looked up at Jack, then without a word lifted up Daffy, who jumped into his father's arms with a shout of joy, and rapturously kissed him.

"My lord," said Janin, directly addressing the judge, "it is I who should be standing there—not him. I killed Mr. Ross. I knew that Mrs. St. George possessed valuable sapphires, and in an evil moment, when Rose and I were lamenting that we could not marry and go home and settle in our own country, she suggested to me that we should steal them. Her mistress did not really care for the jewels, she said, and her master hated them, and there would be no great search made after them. If she stole them, she would for certain betray herself, so I must do it, make my escape, dispose of the stones abroad, and she would join me later. I was in a city office as correspondent, I hated the work—and I was willing to do as she proposed. Formerly, when young, I was apprenticed to a shoemaker, and when she discovered that any one could easily get into Mr. St. George's house from the cobbler's, she suggested that I should go there as apprentice, and as Trubshoes happened to be in want of one, I applied for the situation, and got it. Mrs. St. George always kept the stones near her, Rose said, and in the most unlikely places, and my only chance of stealing them without being caught, was when she slept downstairs, as she sometimes did, and usually at the suggestion of Rose. On that particular day, she sent me a note saying she

meant Mrs. St. George to sleep downstairs that night, that I was to be on the leads by eleven, watch the house, and when all was quiet, climb through the second drawing-room window, which was easily reached from below, take the sapphires out of her dressing-gown pocket which would be hanging beside her on a chair, and then go down the front stairs, where Rose would be waiting to let me out. The only danger I had to avoid was Mr. Ross's return, but he was going to a ball that night, and would probably be very late. I was then to go straight home, regaining my room in the same way as I had left it.

"All fell out as she had planned—with one exception. We had not planned murder, yet it was done.

"I just went back to my lodgings, had tea, and put my boots outside the door, as if retiring to bed early.

"My room was on the ground floor, overlooking a back yard that opened on some mews, and I easily got out by the window unobserved, and slipped into Trubshoe's place. I let myself noiselessly on to the leads of Mr. St. George's dining-room, and watched the house. It was a dark night, and at eleven o'clock Rose stole out to me through the staircase window, to tell me that all was safe,

and as soon as I saw Mr. St. George's light pass up the staircase, I could go in.

" Soon after eleven, the cook and housemaid went upstairs.

" At twelve o'clock I saw, being close now to the staircase window, Mr. St. George turn out the gas over the drawing-room door, and go upstairs.

" I concluded Rose to be downstairs, waiting for me, and keeping guard.

" After a little while I decided to get into the house.

" It was more difficult than I expected, and it must have been while I was struggling with those difficulties that Mr. Ross came in, and passed up the stairs without my hearing him.

" In getting through the window at last, I struck against a small table or something that fell over with a loud crash. The very next moment I heard someone running quickly downstairs, and opening the outer door; so, not knowing where to hide, I turned to the recess, where Mrs. St. George lay asleep, and tried to pull the folds of her dressing-gown round me as I crouched behind the chair. There was very little light in the room, but enough to show me the folding doors flying open, and a man coming in, in his shirt sleeves, who made straight for me, though I could see him far better than he could see me.

"'There's somebody here,' he said, groping about with his arms, as if he didn't know the place very well, and then he came close to the foot of the bed, which was a very low one, and stopped short, staring down at the lady as if he were struck silly, or as if wondering how she came to be there.

"I saw then that he had a pistol in his hand—a mere toy thing—but not knowing how he might use it—and sure that he would see me when he took his eyes off the lady—I sprang up meaning to snatch it out of his hand, and all taken by surprise as he was, he pointed it at me, and I struck up his hand, and it went off on the instant, and he fell over with his head on the foot of the bed—dead."

Janin paused, and wiped the sweat from his brow.

"Janny's telling a story," said Daffy, in an awed voice—"what's it all about?" adding, in the same breath:

"O! look at that funny 'ole man in a cap'!" and he pointed his forefinger at the judge.

"I picked up the pistol and tossed it away—it fell between the bedclothes and the wall, and the poor young lady slept soundly on, looking as innocent and sweet as an angel, but it didn't seem to me strange —*then*.

"I never thought of the sapphires; I had clean forgotten them. I only wanted to get away from

that—and I slipped out of the room and ran downstairs and out of the house so fast that Rose wasn't quick enough to stop me as she came out of the dining-room, so she thought I'd got the stones and didn't know anything about the murder till next morning.

"I went back to my lodging. I kept on at the old life. I knew if I ran away I should be suspected, and I believed I could hold out till all danger was over. But I didn't reckon on Mr. St. George being found guilty, and when Rose, always pestering me and blaming me for not having taken the sapphires, brought her master's little child with her, I"—he stopped and something seemed to half choke him—"got to love him, God bless him, and so I've come here to-day to set his father free.

"You'll kiss me, Master Daffy?" he said in a lower voice, looking up at the boy; "p'r'aps it'll be for the last time," he added, but Daffy did not hear him.

When his father held him down to the pale man, he clasped Janin's neck with both hands, kissing him with all his heart, his golden curls falling over, and half hiding both their faces. "Going to take Daddy home to mother now—come and see you t'morrer!" he said, "and we'll *'ave* another little game together!"

But Janin knew better.

CHAPTER XVI.

"O, she's down on her bendit knee,
I wat she's pale and wearie;
O, pardon, pardon, noble king,
And give me back my dearie!"

"*Hush!*" said Jack, as in the dusk he turned the latch-key in his own door, and softly let himself and Daffy in.

Daffy had learned his lesson as he came along, and now struggled down out of Jack's arms, beat with importunate little hands on the door that had not been unlocked all day, while Jack slipped out of sight and waited.

"Mother!" said Daffy at the key-hole, "mother!" and the joy in his voice, some fresh *new* joy surely, brought a gleam of hope to Elizabeth's miserable heart, and stumblingly she rose and unlocked the door.

It was quite dusk now, but the two saw one another very well, and sprang into each other's arms.

"Where have you been all this while, my sweetheart?" she said, quite unaware of his having been out, a fact of which Mrs. Chick had not dared to inform her.

"O! playing!" said Daffy, feeling himself to be a very deceitful person indeed, and hugging her with all his strength. "Poor mother left all by her lone self—hours an' hours! Wonder what Daddy 'ud like for dinner?" he added, suddenly forgetting his part.

"Daddy will not be home to-night," she said, with a catch in her voice, knowing that if good news had been abroad, it would have reached her long before this.

Daffy chuckled, as if enjoying some private joke hugely, and kissed her with even more intoxicated delight than before, as she turned to kindle a light, which showed with cruel distinctness the strained eyes, the worn young face, and the slight figure, shrunk to a mere nothing, in her black serge gown.

The shadow outside stole nearer to the door with a gesture of passionate pity of longing that merged themselves into an ecstacy.

For did she not love him still? Would she have wasted to this poor ghost for a man who had earned only her contempt and hatred, without having the power to make her suffer?

"Shouldn't wonder if Daddy *did* come 'ome to-night," said Daffy, gravely, "s'posin' a little bird comed and told me so—what would you say to *that?*" he added, loudly and triumphantly.

Elizabeth trembled—she knew how clever Daffy

was, how seldom he made a mistake in his facts, and some faint, delicious glimmering of hope dawned in her eyes as, putting him from her, she said :

" Rose has come back—she told you something, Daffy ? "

" Rose a naughty 'ooman," said the boy, shaking his head ; " heard Janin say so—somfin' about your blue stones—somebody else told me Daddy was comin' 'ome to-night ! "

" Jack ! *Jack !* " she cried, wildly, deliriously, like one long ravened with cold and hunger who is suddenly confronted with warmth and plenty, " where are you, Jack, where ? "

" Here," said Jack, coming swiftly in, but only just in time, as beneath the mingled rapture and agony of the moment she fell senseless to the ground.

All through the hours of that long day she had never once lost consciousness, but wide-eyed and vividly alive, she had drunk her bitter cup, drop by drop to the dregs, and now nature took her revenge, denying her the power of tasting her joy, while yet it was barely at her lips. Jack kissed her pale mouth as he laid her down, a mere feather weight now in his strong arms, and chafed her little hands as he kneeled beside her, Daffy looking on, with heaving breast, sorely cast down at this sad reception of his glorious news.

But soon Elizabeth opened her eyes, and stole an arm round Jack's neck. Why, on that fatal morning, had not heart met heart, and eyes met eyes as they were meeting now?

"Jack," she said in a whisper, "why have they let you come here—to say good-by? I never blamed you, dear—God forgive me! I admired and loved you all the more for it—to be so jealous showed how much you loved me—if I had been you, and you me, I would have done it myself. . . . are you not shocked to see how wicked your little Elizabeth has grown? And because, having done it, you could take your punishment without a word of complaint . . . . though you were hard upon me, dear—very hard."

She was smoothing the hair from his forehead as she spoke, satisfying by the mere touch of him, the body and soul hunger with which she had longed for him through the last terrible weeks.

Jack dropped his head down beside hers on the pillow. If she could love and cleave to him thus, believing him guilty, was he not indeed the richest man on earth? Presently he would tell her—presently.

Daffy, who had always an exquisitely fine sense of when he was in the way, had slipped out of the room, and gone down to the overjoyed Mrs. Chick

to help her to get something very nice for dinner.

"If, for one brief moment," said Elizabeth, with her lips to Jack's cheek, "you suspected me of having disloyal thoughts to you, you must very soon have known how impossible such a thing could be. I could bear all the rest, but not that—not that! He was our friend, and I trusted and honored him."

She paused a moment, then went on again.

"Once I loathed and hated him, but I have suffered so much since that morning, and I have forgiven him now. Sometimes I have thought, that not knowing I was sleeping there, he came down to speak to you. . . . but you know best. It is true I had a little secret with him, my husband, and it concerned you. I could not bear to see you worried for money, and I might not sell those miserable sapphires (though I broke *that* vow afterward), and I asked Barry to help me sell a reversion to which I was entitled, and he was finding out all about it for me, and two or three times we met to talk it over. That night I sent him a note—just two or three lines—telling him he might conclude the matter for me, and I gave it to Rose to place in his room. I never once woke during that night, and in the morning"—she paused trembling.

"How I hated him as I saw him lying there, when

once I had looked in your eyes! O, my God, that look of yours brings the color to my face whenever I think of it! ["God forgive me," groaned Jack.] "How could I be so vile a thing, and in so short a time? I was angry—I could not have kneeled to you *then*. Afterward"—her head sank lower.

"Elizabeth—my little love, my darling," he said, taking the small, pale face in both his hands, "try and remember, my sweet. After Rose went downstairs that morning, did she burn anything when she came back?"

"Yes—I smelt something like paper burning, but I didn't notice. I was listening for your step on the stairs. O! Jack! How long are they going to let you stay with me?"

Jack looked down very solemnly and earnestly into Elizabeth's blue eyes—bluer and sweeter now, surely than they had ever been before.

"Elizabeth, little wife," he said, "I did not kill poor Barry. I thought—don't take your arms away from me, child—don't shy away from me. I thought that *you* killed him. Stay! forgive me yet once more—I thought that you had allowed him to admire you, for he loved you, Elizabeth, O! he loved you! and that he had misunderstood you, and you, in your horror and anger at his appearance there, had slain him."

Elizabeth lay like one stupefied, gazing at Jack.

"Can you forgive me, love?" he said, "that I could live with you, know your character, and all your sweet goodness, yet believe you capable of such a brutal act of madness as that? And I came to actually exult in it as a proof of how dearly you loved me; but my only fear was, that when you accused yourself, they would believe you."

"And so you could die for me?" said Elizabeth, with trembling lips; "you could not speak to me, but you could die for me—all guilty, and worthless as I seemed. O! what am I to deserve such love? And I could think that you—*you* committed murder——"

She grew paler yet, her heart almost stilled by stress of emotion, then she whispered:

"Who did it?"

"Rose's lover," he whispered back; "it was an accident—he came to steal your sapphires."

Elizabeth laughed, and at the delicious sound, Jack's heart bounded.

"Those sapphires," she said. "What did you always say about them?" Her voice changed abruptly. "Barry—poor Barry!" she said. "O! Heavens, how I have wronged him!" The slow tears fell heavily down her white cheeks. "Might I not have known that it was impossible for him to change so . . . and he loved Daffy, and Daffy

loved him. But how did he get your pistol?" she added, suddenly.

"I lent it to him only the week before. After being in those riots in Ireland, he fancied himself shadowed over here, and carried firearms."

"Then how came that man from Scotland Yard to find it in your possession?" said Elizabeth, touching pitifully one of the hollows in Jack's young face, aged beyond belief during the past weeks.

"When everybody had gone, and I was in the room alone, I saw something bright shining between the bed and the wall. It was the pistol I had lent poor Barry. I had barely hidden it, when I turned and saw Mr. Skewton."

"And so Rose drugged me that night?" said Elizabeth, thoughtfully, "and it was at her suggestion I first started the sleeping downstairs—which you never liked. But I had a horror of that low-ceilinged room at the top. O! Jack, if only we had not let poor Barry in!"

"It's no good looking back," said Jack, manfully, "it was all a miserable chapter of accidents—for Janin never meant to kill him. But he is sure of a light sentence."

"Who is Janin?" said Elizabeth, so emboldened by happiness that she began to remember she had not broken her fast that day.

"Rose's sweetheart. And but for Janin—and because he loved Daffy so much, that he actually confessed, more to make the little chap happy than to save me, I do believe—I should not be here to-night."

"God bless Janin, then!" said Elizabeth.

"God bless Janny!" echoed Daffy's voice, from the door, as, tied up in Mrs. Chick's apron, he first ran and kissed them both, then asked what they would please to like for dinner? "Because," he added, with a shout of triumph, "*us* is going to cook it!"

THE END.

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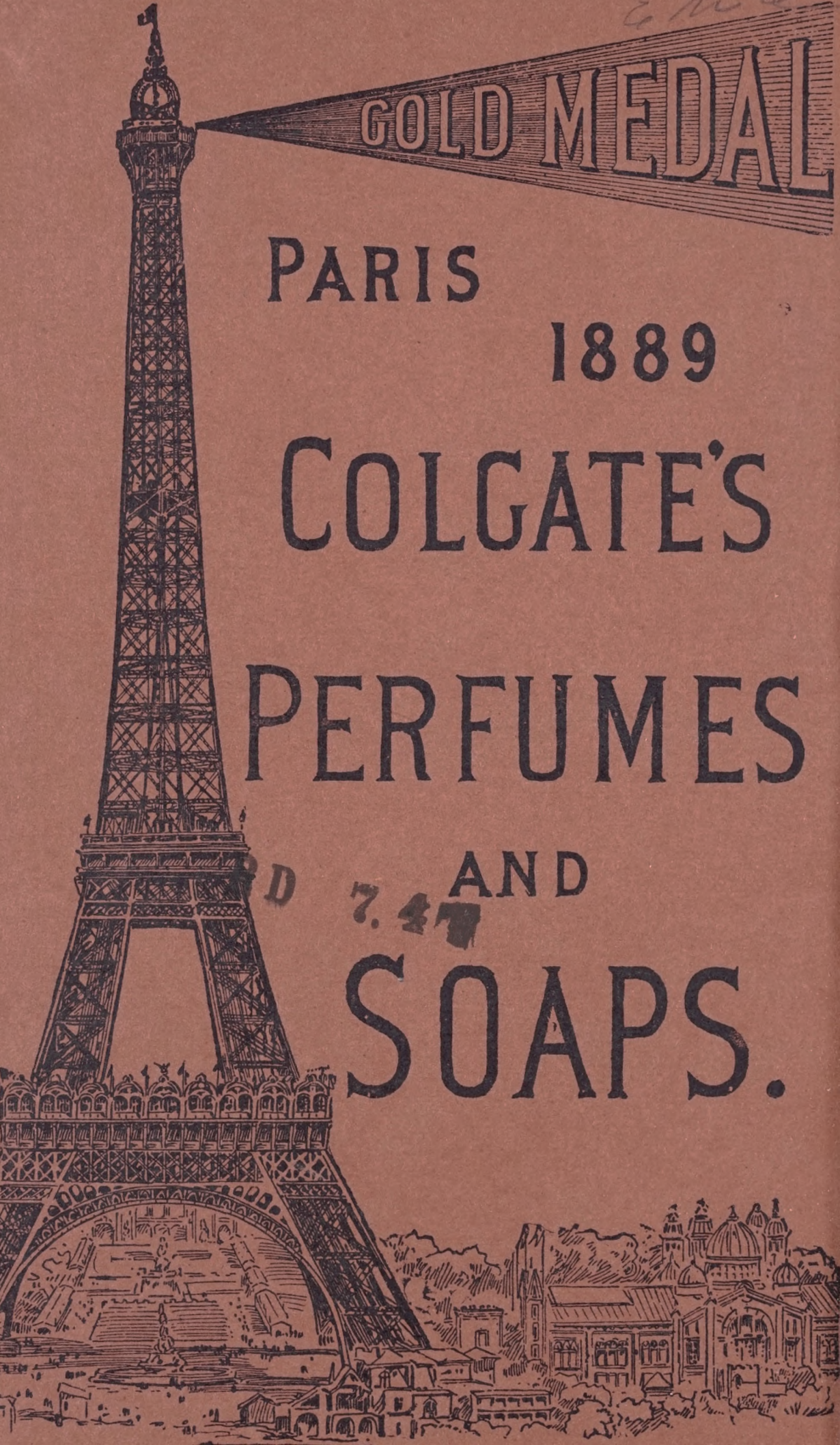

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